

How We Got The Bible

**A History of the
Transmission of the
Bible Through
Twenty Centuries**

By Jack Burch



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Chapter 1

Ancient Books and Writing

Introduction

The history of the Bible is shaped by the history of writing and of writing materials. We cannot definitely determine just when and where writing began, but scholars generally agree that it has been with us since 4000-5000 B.C.

Although the New Testament is by far the best attested book of the ancient world, no two manuscripts of the New Testament read exactly alike. This has been a source of confusion to some and has caused skepticism for others when the integrity and reliability of the text are considered. If it is true that no two manuscripts read alike, how can we believe that its message is reliable and trustworthy? The Islamic world has frequently attacked the Bible on these grounds, stating that it is inferior to the Koran in this respect. However, every ancient book, including the Koran, is subject to the same problems of variant readings if many handwritten copies have been made in various parts of the world.

The answer to this perplexing question is to be found in a better understanding of the history of the transmission of the text. It is important to know that scholarly studies have demonstrated over and over that the message of the Bible, in spite of its many variant readings, has been transmitted accurately and faithfully through many centuries.

Ancient Writing and Writing Materials

Inscriptions in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia show that writing, in various forms, can be traced back to about 4000-5000 B.C. Some Babylonian inscriptions can be dated about 3750 B.C., although writing in Palestine only comes to us from about 1500 B.C. Moses, of course, wrote on tablets of stone, and in the “book of the covenant,” indicating that writing on stone, and other media was known in about 1400-1200 B.C. The actual collection of the books of Moses was undoubtedly accomplished at a much later date however.

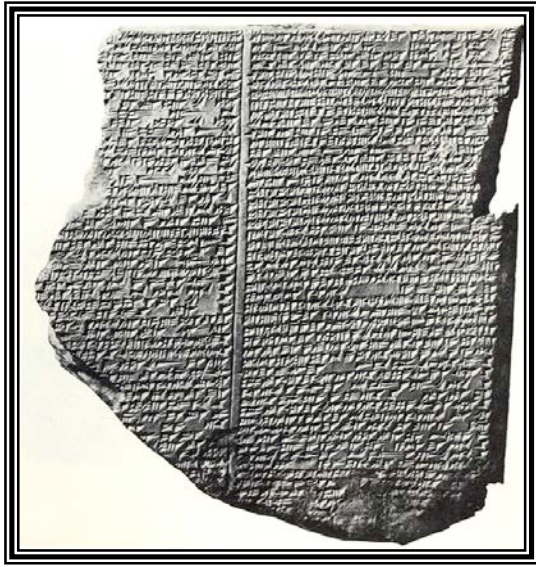
Ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian Writing

Until the invention of printing in 1450, duplication of every book or document had to be made by hand copying. Archaeological discoveries over the past one hundred fifty years or so have greatly enhanced our knowledge of ancient writing, thus enlightening us on various aspects of the transmission and also the interpretation of the Biblical text.

The very earliest forms of writing are almost universally believed to have been pictograms, *i.e.* simplified drawings of common objects. This seems to have later developed into symbolic representations for ideas along with a sort of alphabet. Although the Meso-

potamians used some pictographs, the best known and advanced use of this type of writing was the Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Most of the ancient Mesopotamians wrote on clay tablets, using a stylus and unbaked clay. These tablets were usually oblong, measuring only a few inches in each dimension. A wedge-shaped stylus was used to make an imprint in the soft clay. A very complex arrangement of these impressions determined the letter or the word. After the text was completed, the tablet was left to sun-dry, or may have been fire-baked.



**The Gilgamesh Epic
Cuneiform Writing**

This form of writing was called cuneiform, and it continued in general use throughout Mesopotamia and other parts of the Middle East until the late first century B.C. Although languages varied throughout Mesopotamia, the cuneiform alphabet was widely employed.

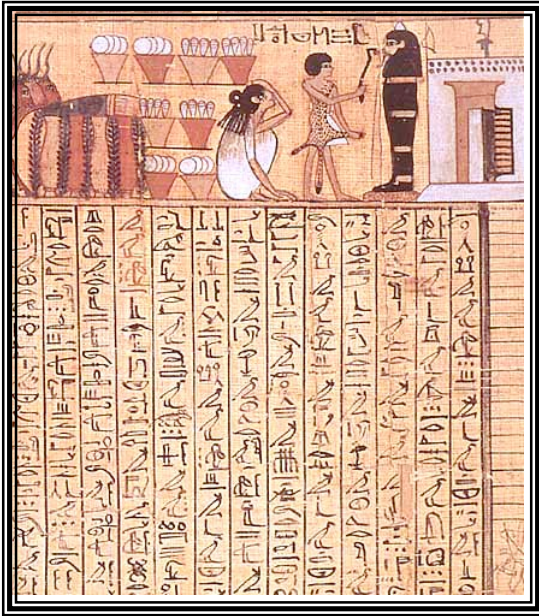
Between 1848 and 1876 a group of British archaeologists led by George Smith excavated the palace of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria (668-626 B.C.) in Nineveh, its ancient capital. Nineveh is located just across the Tigris River from modern day Mosul, Iraq. Among the discoveries was the Gilgamesh Epic, a Babylonian account of the flood. Although this tablet dates from about

the time of Ashurbanipal, the Epic itself is thought to have been in existence perhaps as early as the days of Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.).

Excavations of American scholars at Nippur from 1888-1900 brought to light about 35,000 clay tablets, some of which date back to the third millennium B.C. Nippur, located about 150 km. (95 miles) south of modern day Baghdad was once a thriving city of Mesopotamia. These tablets yielded commercial texts, historical information, religious mythology, social customs, and important information dating to the time of the Babylonian Exile of the Jews. Among these finds was a Sumerian account of the Flood which antedates even the Gilgamesh Epic.

The early Egyptians left many stone inscriptions for us, on temples, monuments, walls, and other places. These people are well known for their use of hieroglyphics, a pictographic form of writing. Although little is known about the very early history of the development of Egyptian hieroglyphics, many scholars believe that it may have originated in Mesopotamia rather than Egypt, but that it was independently developed by the Egyptians. On the other hand, when such writing first appears in Egypt, it seems to have already been in a highly developed and very complex form. Most hieroglyphic writing was done on stone although some has been discovered on papyrus or other writing material. Papyrus discoveries show signs of the evolution of hieroglyphics into a sort of cursive

style – a flowing or running hand – and by the eighth century B.C., this writing had reduced itself to a more simplified form.



Egyptian Hieroglyphics

During the fourteenth century B.C. the Akkadian language of Mesopotamia was becoming more or less international bringing with it cuneiform writing. In Egypt both hieroglyphics and cuneiform existed side by side. Egyptian royal scribes employed cuneiform in their communications with Western Asiatic and Mesopotamian nations. This fact was unknown until the discovery of 350 clay tablets known as the Tel el Amarna letters. In 1887, while digging in the ruins of the ancient city of Amarna, about 190 miles (306 km.) south of modern day Cairo, an Egyptian peasant woman accidentally discovered this group of clay tablets. Amarna was the city to which Amen-hotep IV, also known as Akh-en-Aton (1370-1353 B.C.), had moved the

capital. It was an important city in his day. Amen-hotep was the husband of the famous queen Nefertete, and the father-in-law of Tutankhamen (King Tut) who succeeded him. The Amarna documents were diplomatic letters written to Amen-hotep from certain Canaanite and Akkadian-Babylonian cities, some of which describe political and military threats to the security of certain areas under Egyptian control. These incursions came from people called the Habiru. The tablets are now divided between museums in Cairo, Berlin, and London, with the bulk of them residing in the British Museum.

Code of Hammurabi

The ancient Mesopotamians not only wrote on clay tablets, but frequently used stone as their medium. Many monuments, stone slabs or pillars (called stelae), and tablets have come from a variety of discoveries made by archaeologists. One of the most famous is the stele containing the Code of Hammurabi, king of Babylon from about 1728-1686 B.C. This pillar of black diorite stone is nearly eight feet high (2.4 meters), and had been set up in the temple of Marduk in Babylon. Many of its laws were widely observed in the days of the three great patriarchs of the Old Testament. An example of this is seen in Abraham's treatment of Hagar. There are also similarities between the Code of Hammurabi and certain provisions of the Law of Moses. The Code was written in cuneiform script and is now in the Louvre in Paris, France.

Papyrus

The use of papyrus as a writing material dates back to about 3,500 B.C. The real home of this material was Egypt, although the papyrus plants grew also in other areas. The pith of the plant was laid down in two layers at right angles to each other. This formed the sheets which were then fastened together side by side to make a long writing surface.

These sheets were dried and rolled up to form a scroll, the height of which averaged about 10 inches, depending on the length of the pith. A roll about 35 feet long would accommodate one of the longer Gospels. The abundance of papyrus in Egypt made her the primary supplier of writing material for many countries. Although clay tablets continued to be used in a few areas on into the late first century B.C., by 500 B.C. papyrus had become the universally accepted material to receive writing. The Greek historian Herodotus stated that he could not conceive of a civilized people using anything else.

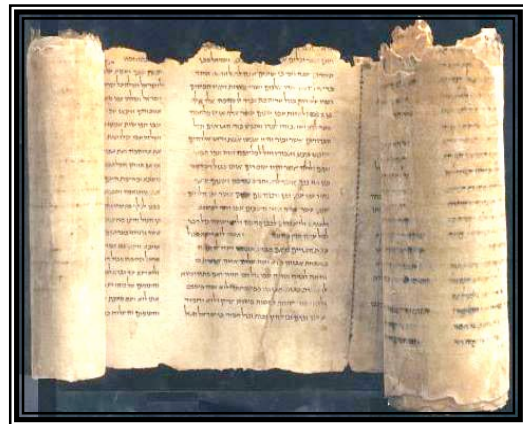
By the time of the New Testament papyrus had been in general use for a very long time. Because it was relatively inexpensive, its use was widespread. However, the great disadvantage of papyrus was its lack of durability. With age it becomes dry and brittle, and is subject to deterioration. The natural climate of parts of Palestine, Egypt, and Dura on the Euphrates have preserved some papyrus manuscripts, many of which are in the libraries of England, America, France, Germany, and Egypt. Papyrus was doubtless the material used by the writers of the New Testament.

Dead Sea Scrolls

The most famous leather scroll ever discovered is the Isaiah scroll found in a cave near the Dead Sea. Sir Frederic Kenyon has made the following statement concerning the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls. "It is no exaggeration to say that the scrolls from the Dead Sea caves are the biggest discovery yet made in what may be called the archaeology of the Hebrew Bible." (Frederic G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 31.) Khirbet Qumran, about one mile from the site of the discovery is located about eight miles (13 km) south of Jericho near the northwest corner of the Dead Sea.



Qumran Caves



Dead Sea Scrolls

In February or March, 1947 an Arab shepherd boy about 13 years old was searching for a lost goat and stumbled on the first cave. The opening of the cave was elevated on a cliff, and the young boy threw a rock to see if he could hit the opening of the cave. The rock struck a clay jar inside the cave's entrance, and the boy heard it crash. Investigating it further, he discovered a number of jars containing leather and papyrus rolls wrapped in linen cloths.

He took some of the scrolls into Bethlehem and sold them to a Syrian Orthodox antiquities dealer. Later this dealer and his intermediaries sold some of the scrolls to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in Jerusalem, and to Professor E.L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University. Toward the end of 1947 the Arab-Israeli war broke out. This, along with other complications make it impossible to trace the scrolls during the months following their discovery.

Within a few years scholars from a variety of countries began to investigate the discovery and located a number of other caves in the immediate vicinity. These additional discoveries, along with the ruins at Khirbet Qumran were investigated, and each yielded its own contribution to the wealth of information hidden for centuries. A relatively large group of the scrolls was taken to America, and in 1955 was sold to a private purchaser acting on behalf of the Israeli Government. This group consisted of (1) the first Isaiah Scroll, practically complete, (2) the Manual of Discipline, (3) the Habakkuk Commentary, (4) an Aramaic work now known to be a pseudepigraphical work on Genesis. The scrolls bought by Professor Sukenik consisted of (1) a second scroll of Isaiah (incomplete), (2) *The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness*, and (3) a group of Thanksgiving Psalms. In addition, other scrolls have come to light including two manuscripts of Daniel and fragments of every book of the Old Testament except Esther. Almost all of the scrolls and fragments show excellent handwriting, and the texts were written on animal skins. A small number were written on papyrus. These Qumran scroll discoveries have been dated as early as the second century B.C., but not later than the first century A.D.

The discovery of the Scrolls led to a 1955 reinvestigation of the ruins at Khirbet Qumran. Most scholars agree that these ruins once housed a monastic Jewish religious sect known as the Essenes. Heretofore our only information concerning this sect was that given by Josephus who claimed to have been a member of the sect in his younger days, a slight reference by Philo, and a comment by Pliny the Elder who said that the Essenes had a settlement on the west side of the Dead Sea, "above En-gedi." En-gedi is about twenty miles (32 km) south of Qumran.

Codex Form of Books

Shortly after the close of the first century the popular form of scrolls gave way to a more useful form called the codex book. This was simply a book bound in quires of writing material similar to the construction of our modern day books. Some scholars believe that Christians may have had a hand in inventing this type of book in order to facilitate ease of turning to various references in a collection of writings (such as the New Testament) while reading and studying, or using the book in church services. While there is no his-

torical evidence for this, it is a fact that the codex form began to be used during the second century. The word codex comes from a Latin word *caudex* referring to the trunk of a tree or a block of wood. Blocks and panels of wood had been used in the ancient world as a receptacle for writing, and when laced together made a sort of book. Although many of the our New Testament papyrus manuscripts are very fragmentary, evidence points to the fact that from the very earliest dates papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament were in the codex form even in Egypt where the scroll had such a long history. This is seen in contrast to the Old Testament Dead Sea Scrolls.

Parchment and Vellum

Parchment, a writing material made from the skins of animals, began to be used as early as the early second century B.C. Some documents were found in 1923 in the ruins of a Roman outpost in Dura on the Euphrates bearing the date equivalent to 196-195 B.C. Because of its expense compared with papyrus, it was not used extensively. Leather, in a variety of forms is known to have been used to receive writing at a much earlier date. Pliny the Younger (A.D. 62-113) quoted the Roman writer Varro (first century B.C.) as saying that parchment was invented by Eumenes of Pergamum. He refers to a controversy arising between Ptolemy of Egypt with a rival book-collector, and Ptolemy placed an embargo on the exporting of papyrus about 197-182 B.C.

Since “necessity is the mother of invention,” the embargo on papyrus highlighted the need for suitable writing material giving rise to the further development of parchment. Parchment was made primarily from the skins of sheep and goats. Vellum was simply a much higher grade of parchment, and soon came into general use for copying important documents. It was made from the skins of veal (calves, sometime unborn), and antelope. The writing surface was prepared by cleaning the skin and removing the hairs, scraping and smoothing both sides, and finally rubbing it with powdered pumice. In later centuries vellum was sometimes dyed purple (the color of royalty), and trimmed in gold or silver. Many of the later New Testament manuscripts also had intricate artwork depicting Biblical themes and characters or saints, and are referred to as illuminated manuscripts. The study of these illustrations is called iconography.

How the Bible Came to be Written

The Old Testament

The Old Testament came into existence over a period from about 1200 B.C. to 300 B.C., or approximately 900 years. Little is known of the dates and authors of the very earliest writings possibly because the ancient Israelites seemed to have had little interest in preserving this information and identifications. Various documentary theories have been developed concerning sources for these writings and their dates. The dates given above constitute the longest possible period for the production of the Old Testament. The writers were primarily from Israel, Job being the lone exception. There is no evidence that he was a Hebrew.

The Old Testament writings provided Israel with both religious and historical information concerning their unique relationship to God and other nations. The book we call the Old Testament was known to them simply as the Sacred Scriptures, and it contained the books they considered to be authentic. This collection is referred to as the canon, a word derived from the Greek *κανων* (*kanon*) meaning a rule, standard or measure. Through the years, as the books were collected into the Old Testament canon, other religious writings also appeared which were considered “non-canonical.”

The words “apocrypha” and “pseudepigrapha” are frequently used to designate some of these books. The word apocrypha means a hidden thing or book, and was later used to apply to that which was considered heretical or spurious. In our own time it is used to refer to a group of fourteen or fifteen books associated with the Old Testament but not part of the Hebrew canon. The word pseudepigrapha means “false writings,” and refers to a group of books written under fictitious names. Among the best known pseudepigraphical writings are such books as The Psalms of Solomon, The Book of Enoch, The Martyrdom of Isaiah, and The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.

The Jews divided their Scriptures into three sections, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (also called the Hagiographa). The Law contained the five books of the Pentateuch, the Prophets include eight books that are designated the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets are Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, while the Latter Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets (as we refer to them) from Hosea to Malachi. The Writings contained eleven books, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (counted as one), and Chronicles. It is important to know that the books contained in the Hebrew Scriptures are the same as those in our English Bible.

Almost nothing is known about the collection of the books of the Old Testament into a canon, but the Jews attribute this to Ezra (about 400 B.C.), based on statements in Nehemiah 8. The discovery of the book of the Law in the Temple by Hilkiah the priest during the reign of Josiah (II Kings 22:1-13) took place about 621 B.C., and is thought by many scholars to have been the book of Deuteronomy. The exact time of its writing is not known, but its content is certain to have been based on ancient information. A close reading of Judges, Samuel, and Kings gives strong evidence that their material was gathered from ancient sources, some of which are identified, *e.g.* “The Book of Jeshar” II Sam. 1:18, “Book of the Annals of Solomon” I Kings 11:41, “Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel” I Kings 14:19, “Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah” I Kings 15:7.

In view of the fact that the history of the Hebrew people covers such a vast amount of time, it becomes obvious that the collection of the books into their three basic component parts took place over a long period of time. As mentioned above, it is quite probable that this was completed by Ezra. From the many references in the Old Testament to God communicating his will to his prophets and others we must conclude that the Hebrews believed strongly that their writings were inspired of God. Inspiration and canonicity are not the same, but belief in inspiration would naturally lead one to see the importance of including an inspired book into the canon. Among the Hebrew people, reverence for a

“Book” (such as the “Book of the Covenant”) would lead them to canonize certain writings. When the “Book of the Law of the Lord” was found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah, its authority was immediately recognized and accepted.

The Writings or Hagiographa, as stated above, was made up of more than the group of five books we generally refer to as the “Wisdom Literature” of the Old Testament. It should be noted that the books of Psalms and Proverbs claim multiple authorships. Aside from a few of the Psalms which refer to specific historical events, the authorships and dates of the various Psalms are unknown. The headings which attribute certain psalms to David, Asaph, sons of Korah, Solomon, Moses, etc. were added many years later and do not constitute Old Testament authority.

During the period of the Maccabees (167-63 B.C.) most of the attention of religious Jews was turned toward the wars with the Syrians, and little time seems to have been spent on religious scholarly pursuits. However, when some measure of religious and political security came there was a flurry of interest in the careful study of the Sacred Scriptures. Two distinguished rabbis arose near the beginning of the first century A.D., each having a strong influence on the populace. These were Hillel and Shammai. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 brought to an abrupt end the national identity of the Hebrew nation creating national, political, and religious problems for the people. This event also brought an end to their worship at the Temple, and they turned even more strongly to Scripture. Vigorous discussions ensued concerning the canon of the Old Testament. Further complicating this struggle was the increasing Hellenistic tendencies of their nation and the perceived threat of the rise of Christianity.

Turning to their Sacred Scriptures provided a source of strength for the people, but they also had to face the question, “Just which books really comprise our Sacred Scriptures?” Such disputes were not new to the Jewish people, for the Sadducees accepted only the Law (Pentateuch) as Sacred Scriptures, creating a controversy with the Pharisees and others concerning canonicity of a major part of the Old Testament. Other religious books had also been published and were revered by many people. The status of such books was in dispute. Between A.D. 90 and 100 a synod of Jewish leaders was convened at Jamnia about 15 miles (24 km.) south of the city of Joppa on the Mediterranean Sea. Although the books of Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Esther were particularly in dispute, they were accepted into the Hebrew Scriptures. The book of Ecclesiasticus was also recognized by some to have a rightful place in the collection. Josephus, a priest and Pharisee who was admittedly a strong partisan, lived during the latter part of the first century of the Christian era. In his works he stated that after Malachi no book was added to the Hebrew canon.

Concerning the Old Testament canon we must not leave out the fact that New Testament writers consistently referred to and quoted from its writings, considering these writings to be inspired as the word of God. This evidence is quite strong. Jesus himself used the Old Testament frequently, citing it as authoritative. The writers of the books of Hebrews and Romans in particular make many appeals to the Old Testament, stating, “it is written,” or referring to it as Scripture. (Examples of this can also be seen in Acts 1:16, 8:32, Rom. 4:3, II Tim. 3:16, Heb. 3:7-11, 10:15-17, II Pet. 1:21 and many others.)

The Text of the Old Testament

The Qumran discoveries provided scholars with the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures. As noted above, these manuscripts have been dated between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D. Leaving these manuscripts however we must come to the Middle Ages before we encounter copies of the Hebrew Old Testament. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we had no manuscript of the whole or substantial part of the Hebrew Old Testament which was older than the end of the ninth century A.D. One of the most famous manuscripts of a portion of the Old Testament is the Samaritan Pentateuch. Although sometimes spoken of as a version, it is not, strictly speaking a version, but just a form of the Pentateuchal text. The earliest known example of this form of text is the Abisha Scroll, still preserved by a small Samaritan community at Nablus in Palestine. Although the Samaritans of the community claim that it comes from the time of Joshua, examination of the manuscript itself shows that it probably comes from about the eleventh century A.D. Scholars generally agree however that the text contained in the manuscript comes from a much earlier period, but there is no consensus as to what that particular time period may be.

Although this rather long time gap from the date of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Middle Ages might seem to be a bit disquieting to some, the text tradition of the Old Testament is very secure. There is little doubt but that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and again in 135 and consequent further dispersion of the Jewish population throughout the Roman world played an important role in this. It must be remembered that the Temple had been the great depository for the Hebrew Sacred Scriptures.

There is also an abundance of indirect evidence for the integrity of the text. The Aramaic Targums give us paraphrases of numerous Old Testament passages prepared specifically for use in the synagogues, and copies of the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament are extant. Christians, when translating the Scriptures, also translated the Old Testament, because they considered it to be an integral part of God's word. Therefore we have the Old Testament in Greek, Syriac, Latin, and various other languages.

An additional consideration is the extreme care which the Jewish scribes exercised as they copied the text. The close agreement of the Isaiah scroll from the Dead Sea cave with the traditional Hebrew texts of the ninth and tenth centuries shows that the Jewish scribes have copied the Biblical text very accurately. Some of their procedures to safeguard the purity of the text are contained in Jewish writings. Each synagogue had a room or cupboard which served as a storage place for older or defaced sacred manuscripts and other documents containing the holy name of God. This room or cupboard was called a Genizah, from a Hebrew word meaning to hide or to store away. If a copy became damaged, or was considered unfit for public use it was placed in the Genizah until a group of these documents could be buried with an elaborate ceremony.

In a Cairo synagogue a discovery was made of a Genizah which had been walled up and forgotten. The synagogue was formerly the Church of St. Michael but was purchased by the Jews in A.D. 882. In 1890 the synagogue was rebuilt and the contents of the Genizah came to light. It contained very valuable Old Testament manuscripts and fragments, the most valuable of which are now in prominent libraries in London, Cambridge, New York, Leningrad, and Oxford. Some of these manuscripts and fragments date back to the sixth century A.D., and they have shed a great deal of light on the work of Jewish scribes and scholars in the centuries between the Dead Sea Scrolls and our oldest Hebrew manuscripts.

The Jews had strict rules which regulated the copying of the sacred text. Nothing could be copied from oral dictation but each new manuscript had to be copied from its own exemplar or parent manuscript. The Scripture texts were placed in a cupboard which faced toward Jerusalem, and they were considered the most sacred objects in the synagogue. Copies had to be exact, even to the point that if a letter in the exemplar was particularly large or very small, the copyist was compelled to duplicate these features. If a word was misspelled in the exemplar the misspelling had to appear in the copy with the scribe's correction written above the word.

The work of the Massoretes is of immeasurable importance in the history of the text of the Old Testament. They took their title from a Hebrew word meaning "tradition." After the Second Jewish Revolt in A.D. 132-135 and the spread of Christianity, the center of rabbinical studies moved from Palestine to Babylonia. These schools in Babylonia flourished until about the ninth century, and some beyond that time. With the Moslem conquest of Palestine in 638 the Jews began to return to their homeland, and the academy in Tiberias became an important center of Jewish Biblical learning.

The Hebrew text was written entirely without vowels (referred to as a consonantal text). Copyists as early as the period of the Dead Sea Scrolls attempted to indicate vowel sounds in the text in order to preserve the correct pronunciation of the words. Their method was largely unsuccessful however, and it was not until the time of the Massoretes that a lasting system of vowel points was developed. It was in Tiberias that the Massoretes of the ninth century did their most notable works of perfecting vowel points and copying the Hebrew Scriptures as we have them in our Bibles today. Their work actually began about A.D. 500 in Babylonia. This has been referred to as the Tiberian system and is universally employed.

The Massoretes had a profound respect for the text, and consistently refused to make corrections even when mistakes were obvious. Instead they made marginal notes. In order to assure accurate copying the Massoretes counted the number of words in a line and on a page, identified the middle word in a page, the middle letter of a book, the middle verse of the entire Law (Leviticus 8:7), and the middle word of the Law (Lev. 10:16). This was done to ensure that the new copy was an exact duplicate of its archetype. Many other safeguards were also practiced.

One manuscript, referred to as the Leningrad Codex, is most frequently used by scholars in the translation of the Old Testament. It is the oldest complete manuscript of the Old Testament known to exist and it is now in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg, Russia (formerly Leningrad). It was not until 1990 that a team of photographers under the direction of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, in collaboration with West Semitic Research, sent a team of photographers to St. Petersburg to make clear photographs of the manuscript. Prior to that time only very inferior, sometimes unreadable photographs were available. This manuscript dates from the early eleventh century. Although this would be considered late when considering New Testament manuscripts, it remains our oldest complete manuscript of the Old Testament. "To insure access for students and scholars everywhere, Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center worked with West Semitic Research, Los Angeles, CA and the University of Michigan to publish a photographic facsimile of the manuscript." This was published by Eerdmans in 1997. (See the article "The Leningrad Codex," at www.abmc.org/projects_leningrad.html.)

New Testament

In contrast to the Old Testament which was written over a long period of time, the New Testament was written over a period of only 45 or 50 years (from about A.D. 50 to A.D. 95). Probably the first New Testament books to be written were Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians, although some scholars believe that Galatians may have been written a little earlier. Each of Paul's letters was written to a particular church or churches ("churches of Galatia") or to individuals (Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). In each case, he instructed these Christians in a wide variety of principles of the Christian life, attempting to solve doctrinal or personal problems or giving general exhortation and instruction. The General Epistles (James through Jude) were also written to encourage the recipients in the Christian life and correct problems in the churches. The book of Hebrews is an anonymous work written to the Hebrew Christians, probably in Palestine. Its authorship is unknown.

The early church needed an accurate account of the life of Jesus. This need was fulfilled by the works of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Both Matthew and John were apostles of the Lord. Mary, the mother of John Mark, was a follower of Jesus and is identified as a member of the Jerusalem church (See Acts 12:12). Papias, a Christian who lived about A.D. 135, tells us that Mark wrote his Gospel under the guidance of Peter while Peter was in Rome. Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, which are obviously two volumes of the same work. In Luke 1:1-4 he speaks of some who had written accounts of various aspects of the Lord's life, and says that he wanted to write so that Theophilus would have an orderly account, and know the certainty of those things believed by the followers of Jesus, stating that Luke himself received this information from eyewitnesses. In Acts 1, Luke refers to the former treatise he had written (the Gospel of Luke). The last of the Gospels to be written was that of John, which is generally dated about A.D.90. He also wrote the books of I, II, and III John and Revelation.

Conclusion

Paleography, the study of ancient writing and writing materials, is of great importance when describing, editing, and analyzing a manuscript. The type, structure, and appearance of the letters used, the composition of the ink, and the type of material employed to receive the writing all play a vital role. By comparing ancient manuscripts, both religious and secular, paleographers have been able to identify, with a great degree of accuracy, a wide variety of components which help to determine the age of a manuscript. This data, when combined with other evidence, provides valuable information for the textual critic.

Chapter 2

The Text of the New Testament

Introduction:

As we noted in the first chapter, the history of the text of the Old Testament is somewhat obscure until we come to the work of the Masoretes in the ninth century. In addition, the number of manuscripts available is very small when compared to the number of New Testament manuscripts we have. When we study the transmission of the New Testament text the amount of material is almost overwhelming both for its abundance and its antiquity. There are the Greek manuscripts, a few of which (papyri) date back to a century following the composition of the books, the ancient versions, the lectionaries and the patristic evidence to work with. Indeed, the fact that there are over 5,000 New Testament manuscripts available to scholars is, in itself, one of the problems of textual criticism.

The Original Manuscripts

Without doubt the New Testament books were originally written on papyrus which would have long since perished due to the fragile nature of that writing material. These writings seem to have been almost immediately copied and circulated within a relatively short radius of their original recipients. Paul encourages the church at Colosse to read the letter he had written to the church in Laodicea, and for the Laodiceans to read the Colossian letter. As early as the first half of the second century, the Gospel of John was circulating in Egypt as evidenced by the discovery of a papyrus fragment containing John 18:31-32 and 37-38. Known as the John Rylands Fragment (P⁵²), this small piece of papyrus is less than nine centimeters high, but its value is far out of proportion to its size. It has been dated about A.D. 135 making it the oldest portion of the New Testament ever discovered. Its primary importance lies in the fact that it shows that copies of the New Testament writings were made and circulated almost immediately after being received. This fragment was originally acquired for the John Rylands Library by Bernard Grenfell in 1922, and may have been originally discovered at the site of Oxyrhynchus, about 125 miles (200 km) south of Cairo, Egypt on the Nile River. It was not until 1935 that the fragment was published by C.H. Roberts. It is now part of the collection in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England.

In thinking about the origin of the New Testament it is important to remember that each book was written individually, and for the most part each one was addressed to a particular church or group of individuals to fulfill a specific need of that audience. In this, we see a considerable difference in the origins of the New Testament and the Old Testament. So, for example, when Paul wrote to Corinth, he addressed the problems and questions of that church, when writing to the Romans he addressed problems of that church. Luke

wrote to Theophilus to correctly inform him about the life of Christ and the early spread of the gospel to the world. These writings would have been in the form of scrolls, and would have circulated separately in the beginning. In the section on the canon, we will discuss the formation of the Pauline Corpus and other phenomena concerning the assembling of the books of the New Testament

As early as A.D. 95, Clement of Rome wrote to the church at Corinth citing Paul's letter to them. This demonstrates the fact that copies of Paul's letters were in circulation from a very early date, and were almost immediately considered authoritative not only by the church or by the individuals to whom he was writing, but also to Christians in general. Of course, all copies were made by hand, and the opportunity for variants to arise in these copies was very real. Until the invention of printing in about 1450 the practice of hand copying was continued, and variant readings multiplied.

Variant Readings

Variant readings are broadly divided into two general types, unintentional variants and intentional variants. Orthographic variants also occurred. Listed below are a few examples of each of these types.

Orthographic Variants

These are variants which arise from differences in spelling and certain other practices within a language. In English for example, Americans write "theater" while the British may write "theatre." Americans write "color" while the British write "colour." All languages abound in these orthographic variations. In many of the Greek manuscripts there appears a movable nu, (the Greek letter "N"). This is added to the ending of many words in some manuscripts, but it has no bearing on the meaning of the word. Other variations in spelling may also occur.

Unintentional Variants

These came into the text for a variety of reasons. Faulty eyesight or carelessness in reading the exemplar (parent manuscript from which the scribe is copying, also called an archetype). For example a scribe may substitute a letter in certain words, or write the letter poorly, actually changing the word. In II Peter 2:13 the Greek word **ΑΓΑΠΑΙΣ** (*AGAP AIS*) appears, translated "love feast." This could easily be mistaken for **ΑΠΑΤΑΙΣ** (*APATAIS*) which is usually translated "deceptions." Also in II Peter 2:18 the word **ΟΛΙΓΩΣ** (*OLIGOS*) is found and is translated "scarcely," but in some manuscripts the word **ΟΝΤΩΣ** (*ONTOS*) is found which is translated "really."

Another type of variant may occur when a scribe looked at a word in line 10 for example in his exemplar, wrote the word or phrase, and then looked back at his exemplar but his eyes went to line 12 where the same word appeared, and continued his copying from that point. In his copy then he would have omitted the intervening words. The opposite may also happen where he was copying from line 12, looked on his copy, and then his eyes

went to the same word in line 10. Thus, he would duplicate the intervening words. The general word for this kind of variant is *homoeoteleuton* (from a Greek word meaning “similar”).

Still another form of unintentional variants is called *haplography*. This is when a copyist writes down only once a word which actually occurs twice. For example, on a number of occasions Jesus said, “**AMHN, AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΥΜΙΝ**” (*AMEN, AMEN, LEGO UMIN*) translated “Truly truly I say to you” (John 1:51) while at other times he only used the word **AMHN** (*AMEN*) “truly” only once. The opposite of *haplography* is called *dit-tography*, which is when a word occurs only once in a copyist’s exemplar but the copyist writes it down twice in his copy.

Confusion of letters due to the same pronunciation of words gave rise to another type of variant. Every language has such characteristics. For example the English words “sail” and “sale” are pronounced the same, but have different meanings. Certain letters and diphthongs were mistakenly exchanged by copyists such as writing ει (*ei*) for αι (*ai*) or vice versa. Both spellings are pronounced the same, but the change might result in changing the meaning of the word. Also ε (*e*) was sometimes substituted for αι (*ai*), possibly changing the meaning of a word. For example in Mt. 11:16 the word ετερος (*eteros*) occurs meaning “others.” In some copies of the manuscripts the scribe has substituted the word εταιροις (*etairois*) meaning “fellows.” A wide variety of this type of variant occurs in manuscripts. They are referred to as substitutions.

Another form of substitution is where a scribe uses a synonym or another word which has an equivalent meaning. An example of this is found in Matt. 2:17 where some manuscripts read υπο Ιερεμιου (*hupo Ieremiou*) which is translated “by Jeremiah” while other manuscripts read δια Ιερεμιου (*dia Ieremiou*) translated “through Jeremiah.” There are many variations of this type. Although the meaning is frequently not changed, this type of variant occurs throughout the collection of manuscripts.

Transposition of words from one order to another is frequent. For example “Scribes and Pharisees” may appear in one group of manuscripts while “Pharisees and Scribes” occur in others. The same is true of transposition of letters within a word. In Mk. 14:65 ελαβον (*elabon*) is in one group of manuscripts, translated “receive,” but in another group of manuscripts it becomes εβαλλον (*eballon*) translated “strike.” In this case there is both transposition and substitution of a letter.

At various times, scribes would observe notes in the margin which had been placed there by a person previously using the manuscript. If the scribe thought these words belonged in the text itself he might copy it into his text. In some manuscripts used by the translators of the King James Version, Rom. 8:1 contained the words translated “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It is thought that these words may have been incorporated into the text in this way. Another example is Matt. 27:35 where the King James Version reads, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, ‘They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.’” Some late manuscripts contain this phrase in Greek. In all probability it came from a marginal note or

was added by the scribe because he thought it appropriate to identify a prophecy regarding this event. The phrase is not found in the oldest and best manuscripts.

Intentional Variants

These variations in the text arise when a scribe is attempting to clarify or harmonize a portion of the text. They may come in a variety of forms including substitution, addition, transposition, etc. Some are attempts to correct a perceived grammatical error or a perceived misspelling. At times scribes would use a synonym for a word which they might have thought was not completely clear.

Manuscripts of some books, particularly in the Gospels have harmonistic variants. This took place most frequently when a scribe altered a text so that it would reflect the same or similar wording or thoughts from a parallel passage in another Gospel. For example, in Matt. 19:17 our English translation reads, “‘Why do you ask me about what is good?’ Jesus replied. ‘There is only one who is good.’” Concerning the same event recorded in Mark 10:18 we read, “‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No one is good – except God alone.’” Some copyists working on the Gospel of Matthew added in their texts the extra phrase found in Mark’s account, “except God alone.”

The same type of variant occurs in regard to the account of the conversion of Saul in Acts 9 and Paul’s retelling of the event in Acts 26. In Acts 26:14 there is the phrase, “It is hard for you to kick against the goad.” In the account in Acts 9:4 a few copyists have added this phrase to the text in their manuscripts, reflecting an attempt at harmonization of readings.

Conflation is another type of variant which characterizes certain types of text. Conflation is the combining of readings from two or more sources, thus creating a third or additional reading. For example in one group of manuscripts the very last words of Luke 24:53 tell of the apostles returning to Jerusalem and staying in the temple continually “praising God.” However another group of manuscripts read at this point, “blessing God.” A third, and very large group of manuscripts reads “blessing and praising God.” These conflated readings are found frequently in manuscripts of the Byzantine text type. This text type will be discussed in a later chapter.

Some scribes were influenced by the theological debates of their time, and were responsible for dogmatic or theological emendations. These are scribal alterations of the text when a particular statement seemed not to fit the scribe’s views of orthodoxy, and he felt that small change in the words would uphold or explain what he considered to be an orthodox position. A heretic named Marcion is the foremost example of this sort of tampering with the text. Fortunately very little of this took place in the transmission of the New Testament text. These types of variants are usually easy to spot.

Criteria for Choosing Among the Variant Readings

The information above leads to the inevitable conclusion that a translator of the New Testament must make a judgment among the various readings found at any given point in the text. Text-critical methodology is the skillful employment of these criteria, knowing that such judgments cannot be made in isolation, but scholars must take into consideration other important factors concerning the text. These other factors will be discussed in a later chapter.

The major criteria used by textual scholars in making decisions between two or more readings are generally referred to as the canons of criticism. Historically these have been employed in both Biblical manuscripts and those of ancient classical literature. The goal of such criticism is to attempt to recover, as far as possible, the original text of a work whether it is Biblical or classical. It should be remembered that these canons are inferences rather than axiomatic principles. That is, they are frequently subjective in their application, and have to be used in conjunction with other criteria. None constitutes a hard and fast rule. Therefore they belong to the realm of probability, and some may be more widely applied than others. None can be considered universal.

First of all, it is not true that the reading found in the greatest number of manuscripts is necessarily the best reading. If it can be shown that ten manuscripts were copied from a single archetype, that group of ten manuscripts really carries the weight of only one. On the other hand, if two manuscripts both carry the same reading, and it can be shown that each of those originated from a different source, or in a different area, these would carry the weight of two.

Secondly, the manuscripts themselves must be weighed. Some types of manuscripts, as will be discussed in a later chapter, have been shown to contain many variants of a certain kind, which are not supported outside of their own family or text type. This fact must be considered when evaluating a reading.

Third, a reading is to be preferred if it can be shown that it more easily explains the origin of other readings. In employing this canon of criticism, a critic may ask himself, "What circumstances might have given rise to this or that reading?" The answers sometime come from theological controversies current at the time the manuscript was copied, a copyist's desire to clarify a passage or to defend his own view of orthodoxy, or the copyist's perception of a textual error in the manuscript.

Fourth, the shortest reading is generally to be preferred. It has been demonstrated by scholars who have investigated scribal variations that there was a tendency for scribes to add to a text rather than delete from it. This can be seen in the tendency of many scribes to conflate readings, or to harmonize readings as in the Gospels. This principle is considered by most textual critics to be the most fundamental of all of the canons of criticism. Some scholars consider this to be demonstrated when we see harsh or obscure readings, contending that the tendency was for scribes to smooth these over, thus altering the text. Some scholars however, do not fully agree with this.

A fifth canon is that the more obscure reading is probably to be preferred. The rationale behind this is that a scribe was more likely to try to clarify a passage than to obscure it. Therefore the more obscure is likely to be more nearly original. Care must be taken in applying this canon, because some accidental errors are made by copyists, and some words or phrases simply might not make sense or might be grammatical or orthographic errors, or inexact quotations. Such readings are not to be selected simply because they are the most difficult or obscure.

Not all of these criteria can be applied to any single variant or with equal weight. In fact, each canon of criticism must itself be weighed to determine its applicability to a given reading. Otherwise they can be seen working against one another. However, the probability of a correct choice of a specific reading is usually enhanced with the increase in the number of criteria which can be legitimately brought to bear on the variant in question.

It will be noticed that the above criteria divide themselves into external and internal evidence. External evidence deals with the characteristics of the manuscripts themselves such as age, number of manuscripts reading together, the family or text type being considered, and the quality and history of a manuscript if that information is known. Internal evidence has to do with such things as scribal habits, and the literary, ideological and theological peculiarities of the author and also of the copyist.

Dating Ancient Manuscripts

According to the latest count there are 5,357 Biblical manuscripts of the Greek text now extant. This total is made up roughly of the following: 86 papyri, 269 Uncials, 2,795 Cursives, and 2,207 lectionaries. However, some fragments have been doubled in the catalogues of various libraries reducing the total number by about 200. Of the total number of manuscripts, about 59 originally contained the entire New Testament, although most of these are now incomplete. (See the article by C.M. Martini, "Text of the New Testament," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976, p. 884.) Additional witnesses of the text would also include the versions and patristics which are not included in the above number. This includes everything from small fragments such as the John Rylands Fragment mentioned earlier in this chapter, to the Cursive manuscripts copied shortly before the invention of printing.

Obviously scholars have not had the opportunity to study each of these in detail, so there remains much work to be done. When looking at a manuscript of the New Testament, one of the most important areas of investigation is to determine the age of the document. Much of what is said here will apply not just to the Greek manuscripts, but also to all of the other materials as well.

How can scholars determine the approximate age of a manuscript? Much of this is based on paleography, the study of ancient writing and writing materials. Since we know approximate time periods when certain writing materials were in general use and the periods when certain styles and formation of letters were in general use, these components become very important in fixing a date for a manuscript. If papyrus was used it would

mean that the manuscript probably should be dated before the first half of the fourth century because we know that by that time vellum was in general use, having superseded papyrus for important books. On the other hand, if vellum is the material of the manuscript one would know that this manuscript probably comes from a time when vellum came into general use. It is possible that such a manuscript could date as far back as the 1st century, but it was not until the mid-second century that the use of vellum became common. In fact, it was not until the late third or early fourth century that its use could be considered widespread.

An important consideration is the appearance and formation of the letters themselves. Are they large or small, straight or slanted, block or rounded, cursive or capital? Large, capital, straight, or block letters indicate an earlier date than cursive or small letters. The type and color ink is also important. The most ancient writing was usually done with very dark black ink whereas the scribes of the Byzantine period used inks of lesser quality which tended to deteriorate more readily. A good quality dark brown ink also was used in very early manuscripts. It is not until we come to the middle ages that we find a variety of shades of ink in use.

Paleographers also look at the size and shape of letters to determine the age of manuscripts. The classification of manuscripts as Uncials or Cursives is descriptive of those documents which use all capital letters (uncial letters) or those using a flowing hand (cursive letters) employing lower case letters. A manuscript written in uncial letters indicates that it was probably copied prior to the ninth century, for it was about this time that the cursive hand superseded the uncial hand. The formation of the letters, whether they are square or rounded, upright or slanted all contribute to the paleographer's evidence to better equip him to make a more nearly accurate estimate of the age of a manuscript. In addition, the exact formation of certain Greek letters may also play a part. From about the first century B.C. until the third century A.D. the style of letters does not seem to have changed very much. The letters were generally high and square. From the fourth century until about the eighth century they progressively became slanted, compressed, oblong, and ornamented. Paleographers consider these characteristics to be the very best tools for determining the age of a manuscript.

On some of the later manuscripts there is an indication of the date they were copied. This may be done by citing a ruler who was in power at that time, or perhaps an important historical event which can be dated by historians. Sometimes scribes would indicate this, and other things in a scribal note called a colophon placed at the end of the text. While this note may contain only personal information such as the scribe's name or a blessing pronounced upon the reader, it may also contain other kinds of information such as dates, feast times, etc.

The vast majority of manuscripts have no spaces between words, no punctuation marks, and no regard for syllables or hyphenation at the end of a line of text. However, in a relatively few manuscripts some of these characteristics do occur, indicating that those manuscripts are of a late date.

As the centuries passed more and more attention was given to the appearance of the manuscripts. Consequently, those manuscripts which are dyed purple, have gold leaf or silver ink, illustrations and icons (illuminated manuscripts), or other artwork can be dated by paleographers and iconographers by analyzing these characteristics. Of course there are textual and other characteristics of interest to scholars as they describe and analyze manuscripts.

Greek Manuscripts – Uncial Manuscripts

As indicated above, there are two general classifications of Greek manuscripts. These are Uncials and Cursives or Minuscules as they are sometime called. First let's look at the characteristics of the Uncial Manuscripts. These are manuscripts in which the scribe used only capital letters. They generally date from the second through the ninth century, the very earliest ones being written on papyrus. All told there are about 300 of these extant. Among the most important are the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, both of which come to us from the early to mid-fourth century. The earliest English translations for which these manuscripts were available were the English Revised Version (1881) and the American Standard Version (1901). These two manuscripts are almost universally considered to have the very best text of the New Testament available today. However, critical analysis is always necessary when using any manuscript.

Greek Manuscripts – Cursive Manuscripts

The second group of manuscripts is called Cursives or Minuscules because of the cursive style of writing. These manuscripts come from the about the ninth century through the fifteenth century. There are over 4,200 extant. Their primary importance is as witnesses of the history of the text, and they do not generally play as important a role in the restoration of the text as do the older Uncials.

Ancient Versions

Ancient Christians, just as present day Christians, wanted the Bible in their own language. This being the case, the translation of Scripture into a variety of languages began as early as the middle second century. Among the first of these versions were the Old Latin and the Syriac. A little later came two important Egyptian versions called the Sahidic and Bohairic. Earlier the Jews of the Diaspora, those living outside of Palestine, had a profound reverence for the Law, and were very zealous for their national religious identity. With their Scriptures in the Hebrew language, but their common language changing to Greek, many of them saw the need to have a Greek translation of their Scriptures. Sometime between 284 and 245 B.C. this work was completed, and the resulting translation was called the Septuagint, abbreviated as LXX reflecting a tradition that the translation was the work of seventy men. It is generally believed that this translation was made in Alexandra, Egypt because that city was an important cultural and educational center for the Jews.

Lectionaries

Because those old handwritten manuscripts were, of necessity, very large and bulky, they were not readily adaptable for use in church services. This gave rise to the practice of copying blocks of Scriptures into a separate book to be used for reading in the worship services. The time of origin and procedures used is not known, but the consistency of passage selection is found to be very widespread. At first these were read on Saturday and Sunday, but later were expanded and selections were read every day of the week. Since these blocks of Scripture were copied into books, these became known as the Lectionary manuscripts. Scholars analyze them following the same text-critical methodology as employed with the Uncial and Cursive manuscripts. They then become additional witnesses to the New Testament text.

Patristics

Ancient Christian leaders wrote and published books, commentaries, letters, homilies, etc. just as is practiced today. These are referred to as the writings of the ancient church Fathers, or Patristic writings. As early as A.D. 95 some early Christian writers sent letters and wrote articles or books exhorting people to live a Christian life, to correct a doctrinal error, combat heresy, etc. Most of these letters were written in either Greek or Latin, and contain many quotations, paraphrases, and allusions to Scripture. Therefore they become important witnesses to the New Testament text.

Conclusion

Each of the types of text-critical material described above will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. The abundance of evidence for the text of the New Testament gives us assurance of its integrity, dependability, and faithful transmission. It should be remembered that we have parts of manuscripts going back to the second century, and complete manuscripts from the fourth century. The total number of ancient New Testament manuscripts and portions of New Testament books runs into the thousands. Contrast this with the manuscripts we have of other ancient writers and books. For example, we have no manuscript of the works of Homer dating earlier than the 13th century A.D., though Homer lived during the 8th century B.C. There is no manuscript of the works of Herodotus earlier than the 10th century A.D., though Herodotus died in 424 B.C. The works of Virgil are found in a single manuscript dating from the 4th century A.D. even though Virgil died in 19 B.C. There is no reason for anyone to doubt the integrity of the Bible. The New Testament is by far the best attested book of antiquity.

Chapter 3

The Greek Manuscripts

Introduction

In contemporary usage, the word “manuscript” may refer to any written document whether printed or written by hand. In textual criticism, the word refers to a hand written document, particularly the continuous Greek text manuscripts (contrasted with the manuscripts of the versions, lectionaries, and patristics). Each of these manuscripts, and there are thousands of them, has its own unique history, characteristics, and value in restoring the original text of the New Testament. Some are fragmentary (an incomplete group of pages, a single page, or only a portion of a page), others are complete. Some contain groups of New Testament books, and others contain only portions of one book. Some come from a very early date, while others are late in their origin. Some are characterized by a certain type of variant readings, while others are characterized by an entirely different type.

Obviously then, manuscripts must be carefully studied, analyzed, and evaluated by scholars so that we may have the very best possible Greek text from which translations can be made. In this chapter, we will briefly list and describe some of the more important manuscripts and note their contribution to the general study of textual criticism. The expressions, “family,” “type of text” and “text type” will be used frequently in this section. A full explanation of the meaning of these expressions will come in a later chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that certain identifiable characteristics in the text of different manuscripts have caused scholars to divide them into groups based on those peculiarities. These groups are referred to as families and text types.

The Papyri

The general use of papyrus as a medium to receive writing was discussed in chapter one. Here we want to identify some specific papyrus manuscripts and briefly indicate their value in the study of the history of the New Testament text. Papyrus manuscripts are universally identified by the letter “P” with a superscripted number beside it.

P⁵. This manuscript is now in the British Library, and presently consists of only two leaves, joined together, and coming from the same quire. It was discovered in 1896-97 by Grenfell and Hunt at Oxyrhynchus, an ancient city about 193 km (120 miles) south of modern day Cairo, and about 16 km (10 miles) west of the Nile River. The first leaf contains John 1:23-31, and the other John 20:11-17, 19-25. This would indicate that the manuscript had originally contained the entire Gospel of John. It dates back to the third century, and its text agrees generally with the Sinaiticus (a – aleph) and the Vaticanus

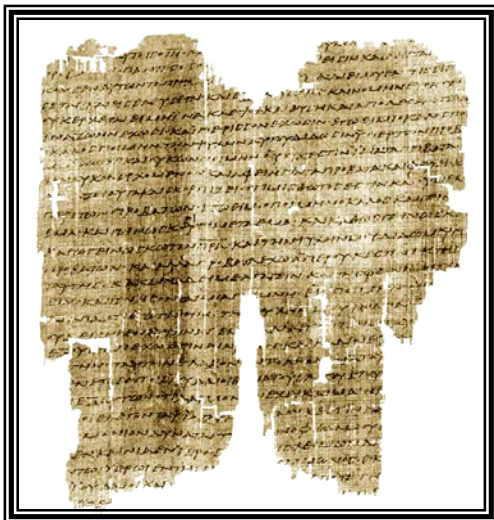
(B) (see below). This shows us that this text type existed in Egypt at an even earlier date than the text of either a or B.

P³⁸. This fragment probably comes from the early fourth century, though some scholars originally thought that it might be from the late third century. It is now at the University of Michigan. The importance of this manuscript is that it contains a text which is markedly of the Western type, often reading like the Codex Bezae (D). This indicates that type of text circulated in Egypt along side the Alexandrian (or Neutral) text.

The next group of papyrus manuscripts is referred to as the Chester Beatty Papyri. There are some Old Testament manuscripts in the collection, and some New Testament. A group of seven manuscripts of the Old Testament were acquired, and one containing part of the lost Greek original of the book of Enoch also came to light.

The New Testament manuscripts consist of three codices which originally contained the entire New Testament except for the Pastorals and General Epistles. Since leaves are now missing, these manuscripts are incomplete. They come to us from the early third century, probably around A.D. 200, making them among the oldest New Testament manuscripts extant.

The acquisition of these manuscripts by Mr. A. Chester Beatty, an American collector residing in London, is an interesting story. Mr. Beatty acquired a group of papyrus leaves from an antiquities dealer in Cairo, Egypt. These were later found to contain various portions of the Greek New Testament, and were edited and published by Sir Frederic Kenyon, an outstanding English textual scholar. Other collectors purchased several leaves of the manuscript from the same antiquities dealer in Cairo, and they were eventually acquired by the University of Michigan.



**Fragment of
Chester Beatty Papyrus P⁴⁵**

P⁴⁵. This is referred to as Chester Beatty I. Originally this manuscript consisted of about 220 leaves, and contained all four Gospels and Acts. Only thirty leaves have survived. The leaves are wide, the letters are small, and each page contains a single broad column of text. The extant portions contain two leaves of Matthew, six of Mark, seven of Luke, two of John, and thirteen of Acts. An interesting phenomenon concerning this manuscript is that its text is mixed, and cannot be assigned entirely to any of the general classifications used by scholars.

P⁴⁶. This is referred to as Chester Beatty II. This manuscript consists of eighty-six leaves, containing portions of the Pauline Epistles in an unusual order: Romans, Hebrews, I and II Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and I Thessalonians. Originally it may have contained II Thessalonians, and possibly Philemon.

P⁴⁷. This is referred to as Chester Beatty III. It contains ten leaves out of the middle of a codex of Revelation. The text is Rev. 9:10—17:2. The top of each page is mutilated, so from one to four lines are missing from each page. The manuscript can be dated during the last thirty years of the third century.

P⁵². This is known as the John Rylands Fragment, and resides in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England. A brief description of this fragment is also given in chapter 2. It is the oldest known fragment extant of any New Testament book, containing parts of John 18:31-33 and 37-38, and measures about 3½ by 2½ inches. It dates from about A.D. 135. Its value is not as a witness to the text itself, but in the fact that it shows that the Gospel of John was in circulation as far away as Egypt within about 45 years of its original writing. This also establishes an earlier date for the composition of the Fourth Gospel than was previously supposed by some scholars.

P⁶⁶. This is one of a group of papyrus manuscripts known as the Bodmer papyri. The script is in a good literary hand, dating about 200. The manuscript is in excellent condition, containing John 1-15, but with a few lacunae (worm holes or similar mutilation), and portions of chapters 15-21. It measures 6½ by 5½ inches and originally contained 146 leaves. Additional manuscripts in the Bodmer collection include P⁷⁵, containing parts of Luke and John, and P⁷² containing the Epistles of Peter and Jude. These also are dated about 200. In spite of the fact that the text has more than seventy differences of word order, it is remarkably similar to the text of **a**, and has none of the peculiarities of D (which will be discussed below). “It therefore becomes an important witness to the reliability of the accepted text of the Fourth Gospel, reaching back into the second century.” (F.G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 190)

The Uncials

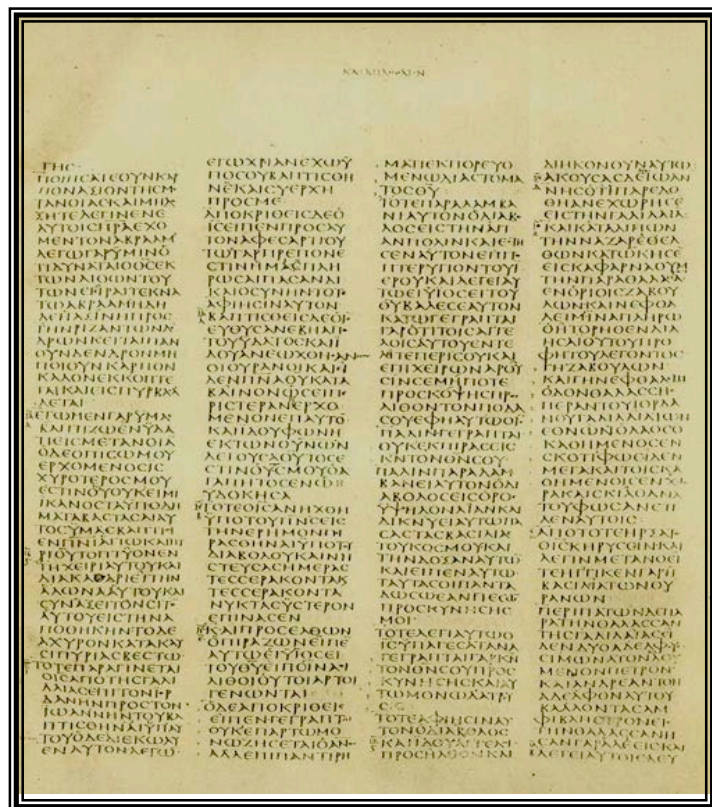
Although the papyri are written in capital letters, it is only the vellum manuscripts which are actually referred to as Uncials. They are universally designated by a capital letter, but a system of Arabic numbers put in place by Casper R. Gregory is also universally recognized among scholars. The number for Uncials is always preceded by a zero. Thus an Uncial manuscript designated as number 3 would be written 03. We will consider the manuscripts in alphabetical order.

Codex Sinaiticus (a-aleph) This codex was first discovered in 1844 by Constantine von Tischendorf (1815-1874) in the Monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mt. Sinai. However it was not until 1859 that he was finally able to procure the manuscript. The procurement was made after the letter designations had already been assigned to Uncial manuscripts. Not wanting this very important manuscript to appear toward the end of an alphabetical list, he designated it **a** (aleph), first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The story

of its discovery is one of the most interesting in the history of manuscripts. In May, 1844 Tischendorf was traveling through the Middle East in search of manuscripts, and visited the Monastery of St. Catherine, knowing that there were manuscripts in their library. While studying there he noticed a basket containing several leaves of a manuscript which were written in the oldest Greek hand he had ever seen. He retrieved about forty-three of these leaves, which contained portions of the Greek Old Testament, but was told by the librarian that two basket loads of similar “waste paper” had been burned in the monastery furnace in the past few days. A little later he found out that there were about eighty more leaves of the Old Testament which were part of the same manuscript. Tischendorf was not allowed to see them, although he was allowed to take those leaves he originally found in the waste basket along with him. In his own words he expressed the situation in this way: “The too lively satisfaction which I had displayed had aroused their suspicions as to the value of this manuscript.”

Upon his return home to Leipzig he presented his treasured manuscripts to King Frederick Augustus of Saxony, and then went about the business of editing and publishing the contents of the portions of the manuscript he had been allowed to take home. These were all Old Testament texts of portions of I Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Esther, with two apocryphal books, II Esdras and Tobit also included. They are now part of the collection at the University of Leipzig.

In 1853 he returned to Sinai, but met with no success in trying to obtain additional manuscripts. In 1859 he made another trip but this time under the sponsorship



Codex Sinaiticus

of Czar Alexander II, the patron of the Greek Church. Still he met with no success. A few days prior to his intended departure the steward of the monastery showed him a copy of the Septuagint. Tischendorf was allowed to take the manuscript into his room, and discovered that this was part of the manuscript he had been searching for. But to his surprise it contained not only the Old Testament, but the complete New Testament as well. In Tischendorf's words, “that night it seemed sacrilege to sleep.”

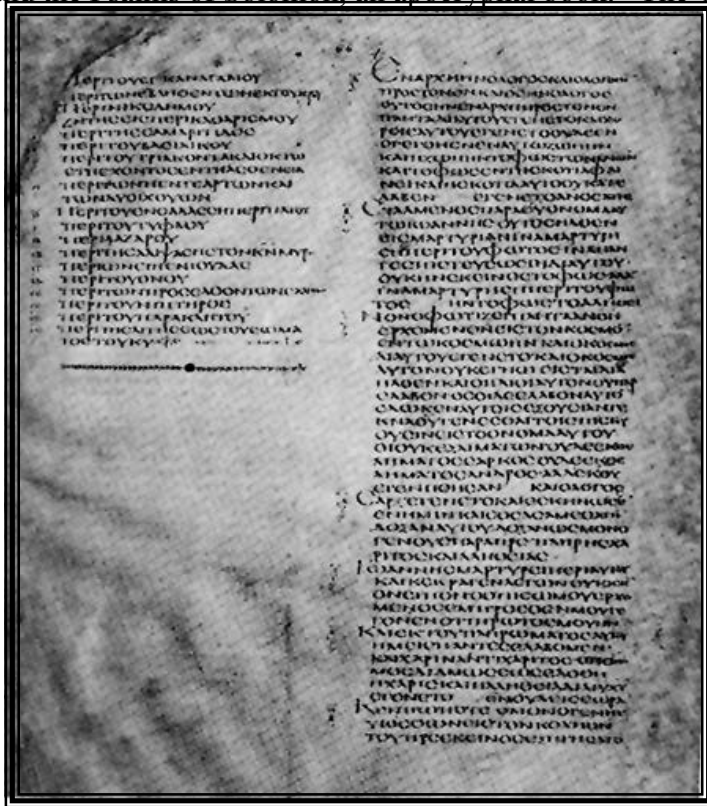
Through much negotiation with the superior of the monastery, and a promise to give the manuscript to the Czar of Russia he was given the entire document. In 1933 the Soviet government under Joseph Stalin, not particularly interested in preserving anything Christian, negotiated the sale of the manuscript to the British. The sale was finally made for the sum of £100,000, the equivalent of which was about \$500,000 at the time of purchase.

The text of the manuscript is basically that which F.J.A. Hort classified as Neutral, and corresponds closely with that of the Codex Vaticanus (see below). Scholars consider it one of the two most valuable manuscripts extant as they attempt to restore the original text of the New Testament. The manuscript can be dated probably around 340 or slightly later since the Eusebian Canons are indicated in the margin. These Canons or sections were divisions of the text of the Gospels, a sort of harmony, and are written in a hand contemporary with the original hand of the text itself. The scholar Eusebius who developed these section divisions died in 340. The pages are large, about 15 by 13½ inches, each written in four columns. The vellum is very fine, and the manuscript is well preserved. It originally contained the entire Greek Bible, but portions of the Old Testament are now missing. It is the oldest manuscript extant containing the entire New Testament. Scholars have identified a group of very ancient correctors who have worked through the manuscript.

The British Library is now leading a major collaborative project to reproduce the Codex Sinaiticus in digital form. An agreement has now been signed between the four project partners, The British Library, St Catherine's Monastery, Leipzig University Library and the Library of Russia. The Project will create a 'virtual' re-unification of the parts of the manuscript held over the four sites and will offer access to a worldwide audience.

Codex Alexandrinus (A). This manuscript was also one of the treasures of the British Museum, but as is the case with all manuscripts of the Museum, it has been transferred to the British Library in London. Its history from 1624 forward is fairly clear, but prior to that we have little or no information. In 1624 Cyril Lucar, patriarch of Constantinople made a gift of this manuscript to Sir Thomas Roe, then British ambassador to Turkey, who in turn was to present it to King James I. James died before the transfer of the gift, and it was given instead to Charles I in 1627, later to be transferred to the British Museum. According to contemporary statements, Cyril Lucar, who had previously been patriarch of Alexandria, originally acquired the manuscript while there. An Arabic notation in the front of the manuscript states that it had belonged to Athanasius II, patriarch of Alexandria who died in 1316, but it is thought that he originally acquired it while he was in Constantinople in the service of the emperor. Thus it seems to have made a double trip between Alexandria and Constantinople. In addition to these notations, there are a few additional traditions stating that a martyr named Thecla, a Christian in Egypt was the original scribe, and that she wrote the manuscript shortly after the Council of Nicea in 325. However paleographical data and other evidence show that the manuscript is probably from the late fourth century, or possibly the early fifth century.

From its Table of Contents we learn that the manuscript originally contained the entire Greek Bible plus the two Epistles of Clement of Rome (see the chapter on the Patristics) and the Psalms of Solomon, an apocryphal book. The Old Testament portion is slightly



Codex Alexandrinus

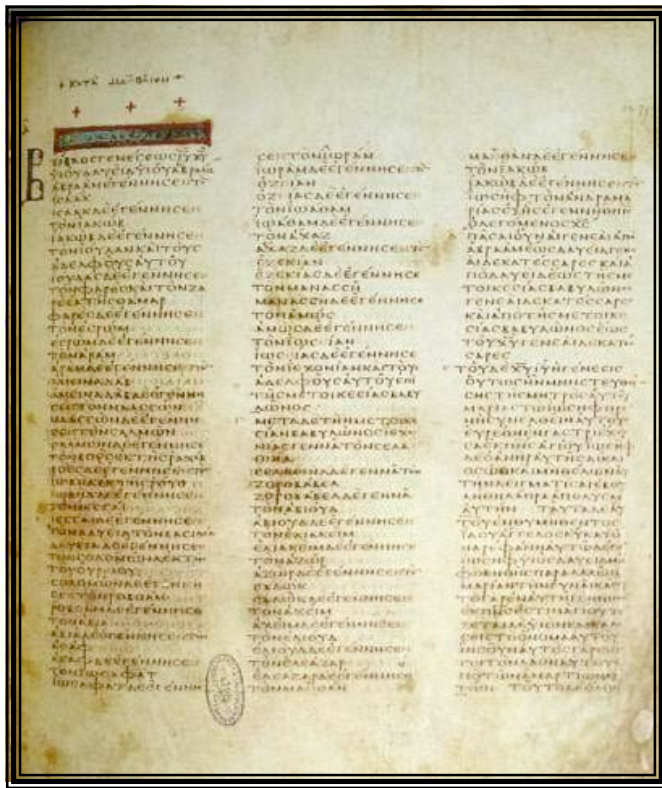
but the New Testament has suffered considerable damage. Almost the entire book of Matthew is missing, and portions of the books of John and II Corinthians are also missing.

The manuscript measures 12¾ by 10¼ inches, and is written in two columns. There appear to have been three different scribes who transcribed the New Testament portion, and two who transcribed the Old Testament portion. The text type is not up to either the Vaticanus (B) or Sinaiticus (a), but its importance is well recognized by scholars. In the Gospels the Alexandrinus is one of the oldest and preeminent examples

have of the Byzantine text type. On the other hand, the text of Acts and the epistles relates more closely to the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus than to the Byzantine text. In the margin of the Gospels are the Eusebian Canons referred to above.

Codex Vaticanus (B). This manuscript is generally considered the most valuable manuscript of the Bible ever discovered. It is in the Vatican library in Rome, where it has been housed from an indeterminate date. It first came to light in 1481, but the time and circumstances of its discovery and its earlier history are unknown. For reasons known only to the Vatican authorities, scholars were not allowed to view or study the manuscript. Napoleon carried it off as a prize of victory to Paris where it remained until 1815. During that time one scholar gained access to it, and brought to the attention of the scholarly world the ancient character and value of the manuscript. Before other scholars could pursue this however, the manuscript was returned to the Vatican where further access was again denied. In 1843 Tischendorf was allowed to see the manuscript for six hours, and in 1845 the great English scholar Tragelless was allowed to see it but was not allowed to copy any of its words. So intent was the Vatican on these restrictions that Tragelless was searched prior to viewing the manuscript, had all of his writing materials taken away, and was accompanied by two clerics who stood by him as he read it. In 1857 and 1859 Cardinal Mai, a Catholic cleric, published editions of the manuscript. Once again in 1866

Tischendorf was allowed to view the manuscript, and copied twenty pages in full, contrary to the conditions imposed. Upon discovery of this the Catholic authorities removed the manuscript. He was able to negotiate with the authorities however, and was allowed six additional days to study it. He published his findings in 1867, and the Roman Catholics published an edition in 1868. Finally in 1889-90 a photographic facsimile of the whole manuscript was published, making the entire contents of the manuscript available to scholars.



Codex Vaticanus

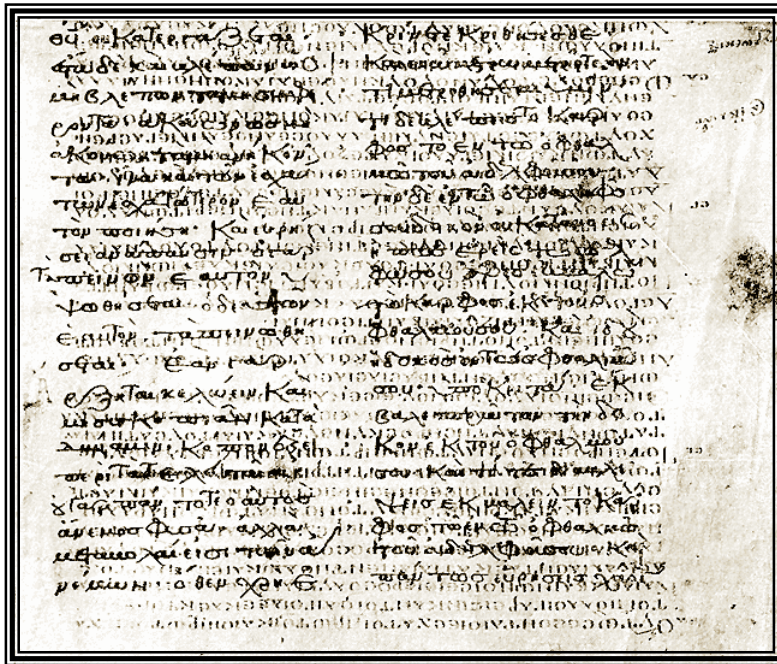
the scribe of the Sinaiticus also transcribed the Vaticanus. Although there are paleographical similarities, this theory has largely been rejected by other scholars.

F.J.A. Hort, as we shall see later, hailed the Vaticanus as the most nearly accurate representative we have of the original text of the New Testament. Furthermore, he considered the Sinaiticus very close. The combination of these two manuscripts was primarily responsible for the dethroning of the Greek text of the King James Version. A handful of scholars, led by J.W. Burgon and F.H.A. Scrivener, vigorously opposed the presumption that these two manuscripts should be given such prominence. Today there are still splinter groups which vigorously oppose the place given to these two manuscripts. However, as will be seen later, the rationale behind the work of Westcott and Hort is sound.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C). This manuscript is now in the National Library of Paris, having been brought from the East to Italy in the early sixteenth century, and then taken to Paris by Queen Catherine de' Medici. It is referred to as a rescript manuscript or a palimpsest.

The manuscript originally contained the entire Greek Bible, but has suffered considerable mutilation. The first 45 chapters of Genesis are missing, and the middle section of Psalms is also gone. The text of the book of Hebrews from 9:14 forward is missing, as are the Pastoral Epistles and the entire book of Revelation. Scholars have been able to determine that the original manuscript contained about 820 leaves, 759 of which are extant. It is made of very fine vellum, and measures 10½ by 10 inches with three columns of text on each page. Tischendorf believed that

sest because it fell victim to a common practice with ancient books during the Middle Ages. Because of the shortage and expense of writing materials, vellum manuscripts were frequently scraped or washed to remove writing of a book which was neither used any longer, nor considered valuable, or where the ink had seriously faded. The surface was then clear enough that it could be reused to receive writing from another author. Since all of the original writing could never be completely removed it was always visible in the background, and much of it could still be read, though with difficulty. Thus the word “rescript” came to be used to describe a manuscript which actually had two sets of writing on it.



Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus

In the case of the Ephraemi Rescriptus, the Biblical text has been scraped off so the vellum could receive the writing of St. Ephraem of Syria, probably in the twelfth century. It is very difficult to decipher the writing which has been almost entirely scraped away, but scholars have used chemicals and ultraviolet light as a means of showing the underlying text. A collation of the underlying Biblical text was done in 1716 by the great English scholar Richard Bentley, but the first publication of the complete underlying

text was made in 1843-45 by Tischendorf when he was just a young man 28 years old.

The manuscript originally contained the entire Bible, but it has suffered severe mutilation. Only 64 leaves remain of the Old Testament, and 143 (out of 238) of the New Testament. Still, the manuscript contains portions of every book of the New Testament except II Thessalonians and II John. The manuscript measures 12¼ by 9½ inches with only one column per page. The Eusebian Canons appear in the Gospels, but there are no divisions in any other books. The age of this manuscript makes it very valuable, for its New Testament text comes from the fifth century, perhaps a little later than the Codex Alexandrinus. As a witness to a certain type of text however it is of very little use because the text type is mixed. Some scholars entertain the possibility that the scribe might have had multiple manuscripts before him, representing a variety of texts. Sometimes it agrees with the Neutral, sometimes with the Western, and at times with the Byzantine. (These text types will be discussed in a later chapter.)

Codex Bezae (D). This manuscript is now in the University Library at Cambridge, England. It is without doubt one of the most curious New Testament manuscripts presently known. It was acquired by Theodore Beza, an associate of John Calvin, in the city of Lyons in 1562 probably after the sack of that city by the Huguenots in that year. In 1581 it was presented to the University of Cambridge. The manuscript contains only the Gospels and Acts.

Kenyon believes that the manuscript should be dated not later than the fifth century, and most scholars agree with his conclusion. It is one of the smallest manuscripts extant, measuring about 10 by 8 inches. A remarkable aspect of the Codex Bezae is that it is our first example of a bilingual manuscript. On the left side of each opening is the Greek text, and on the right is the Latin. The left side of the opening is always considered the place of honor. The presence of Latin probably indicates that it originated in the West since Latin was the language of literature in Western Europe. The fact that it is bilingual has given rise to a great deal of speculation as to whether the Latin was altered to conform to the Greek in certain cases, or the Greek altered to conform to the Latin. Kenyon observes that, "Striking evidence can be produced on both sides; so that there seems to be nothing left but to conclude that *both* texts have been modified, which is in itself not an unreasonable conclusion." (See F. G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 209.)

Because of the many alterations, additions, and other peculiarities of the text there seems to be no end to the amount of speculation concerning this manuscript. Many theories have arisen in efforts to understand and explain its peculiarities. There still is no answer to the problem. It is our chief and earliest witness of the Western text.

The Cursives

As previously mentioned, the New Testament manuscripts have been broadly classified according to the type of writing in the manuscripts. The Uncials are so classified because of the use of capital letters. The Cursives are so classified because they contain what we refer to as lower case letters, or a running or flowing hand. The Cursives are also referred to as minuscules because of the use of small letters. C.R. Gregory, whose original listing of New Testament manuscripts is still in general use today, designated these manuscripts with simple Arabic numerals. The number designation of the Uncials was always preceded by a 0 (01, 02, 03, etc.), whereas the Cursives have no 0 in their numeric designation (1, 2, 3, etc.).

The Cursives make up the bulk of New Testament extant manuscripts, dating from the ninth century all the way into the seventeenth, even after the invention of printing. In 1962 Merrill Parvis said there were 2,533 of these manuscripts, but in the year 1976, C.M. Martini said the number had grown to 2,795, so it is evident that more and more manuscripts are being added to the list. (See *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 598 published in 1962, and also the Supplementary volume, p. 884, published in 1976.) Almost all of the Cursives are of the Syrian text type (to be discussed later). These manuscripts are of interest to the textual scholar, but because of their text type and

relatively late dates, they are not of interest in restoration of the original text of the New Testament.

Some minuscules are of special interest because of their history, and some because of their text type. As a whole, they provide important information concerning both the general history of the text, and which texts may have been in use in certain parts of the world at particular times. Some of these manuscripts have been grouped together into families because of their kindred texts. One of the best known is Family 1, made up of manuscripts 1, 118, 131, and 209. Kirsopp Lake published findings on this family in 1902. This family was further investigated and was seen to be part of a larger group of manuscripts identified as the Caesarean Text. Another group of Cursive manuscripts has been identified, and is generally referred to as the Ferrar Group. This group consists of manuscripts 13, 69, 124, and 346. These have been shown to have a certain affinity with each other, and are also referred to as Family 13. Manuscript 33, containing the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles is a ninth century manuscript which has great affinity with the famous Uncials, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus. Hort referred to 33 as the “Queen of the Cursives.”

Erasmus, the famous Dutch scholar, used manuscripts 1, 2, 118, a fifteenth century Byzantine manuscript, and a thirteenth century manuscript in forming his famous Greek New Testament. In the main, the text of Erasmus formed the Greek basis for the translation of the King James Version (1611).

Conclusion

There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament extant. Constant work is being done on these manuscripts particularly at the International Greek New Testament Project, headquartered at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at the Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California. Here the manuscripts of the New Testament are being collated and studied to discover their relationships and uniqueness.

Chapter 4

The Lectionaries and Patristics

Introduction

In addition to the uncial and cursive manuscripts of the New Testament there are two other groups which usually come under the heading of Greek manuscripts. They are the lectionaries and patristics. Each of these groups contributes its own unique evidence to the text and the history of its transmission. Since these are also hand copied manuscripts each must also pass through the same type of analysis as any other such document, and the same canons of criticism apply.

The Lectionaries

These manuscripts were the old church service books. From the early second century forward it became the practice of the church to read pre-selected portions of Scripture in its worship services. However, a manuscript of the entire text of the Gospels or of the remainder of the New Testament was so large that its use in a church service was very cumbersome. This apparently gave rise to a group of manuscripts referred to as the lectionaries. The specific portions of Scripture to be read on particular days were copied into a book, making a much smaller volume. At each service these lessons were read from the Gospels and the Apostles (the rest of the New Testament except Revelation). Saturday and Sunday lessons appear to have been developed at first, and at a later date week-day lessons were added as well. We have almost no history of the origin of the selection of the passages used in these lections, but we do know that from a very early date the particular passages selected for each day were recognized and systematized over a very wide area of Christendom.

In 1962 there were 1,832 of these manuscripts catalogued, but by the year 2000 there were 2,207. Many of these manuscripts are uncials, but most are minuscules. They are designated by the lowercase italicized letter “*l*” followed by an Arabic numeral, *e.g.* *l*-598 and *l*-1295. The earliest surviving lectionary (*l*-1604) is from the fourth century, but it is quite fragmentary. Only ten lectionary manuscripts dating prior to the eighth century are extant. (See Kurt & Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 81.)

For years these manuscripts were considered to be of little value, and they did not receive their fair share of study and analysis. They were almost never cited in a critical apparatus, and were frequently overlooked in evaluating the New Testament text. In 1933, however, E.C. Colwell and D.W. Riddle of the University of Chicago edited a work entitled, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Lectionary Text of the Gospels*. Since the publication of this work by Colwell and Riddle there have been additional studies of these manu-

scripts made by various scholars, but the lectionaries still receive relatively little attention.

The lectionary system is divided into two general categories known as the synaxarion and the menologion. These lections, which are commonly referred to as “lessons,” are made up of selected passages from the Gospels and the Apostles, and were read on assigned dates. Both the synaxarion and menologion contained lessons for the whole year. The synaxarion was based on a movable calendar going from Easter to Easter each year, and the menologion was based on a fixed calendar going from first of September to the end of August. Some sort of system of lectionaries was probably in use by the fourth century, though our earliest extant lectionary manuscripts do not date even near that time. There are sections marked in some of the early continuous text manuscripts (uncials) which correspond to the passages in the lectionary manuscripts, indicating that the system was developed at a very early date. The length of each lection varies from manuscript to manuscript, some lections being made up of only two or three verses, while a few cover as much as four chapters.

An interesting phenomenon observed by E.C. Colwell is that a lection found in one lectionary manuscript frequently shows a relationship to that same lection in other lectionary manuscripts. In contrast to this, the various lections within one manuscript will probably not show a relationship to other lections within the same manuscript so far as its text type is concerned. Therefore, these manuscripts need to be studied and compared lection by lection, not as an overall manuscript as is the case in continuous text manuscripts. This phenomenon, along with other evidence, led Colwell to conclude that there was a definite lectionary text which was in existence at least from the eighth century through the sixteenth. Another interesting phenomenon associated with the lectionary text is that it seems to be somewhat unique to itself. It has elements of the Byzantine and Caesarean type, but cannot be completely identified with either. See E.C. Colwell and D.W. Riddle, *Studies in the Lectionary Text in the Gospels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933, p.13ff). Scholars believe that further investigation of the lectionaries will play an ever-increasing role in the study of the text.

The Patristics

The early church produced its own scholars and teachers and other writers. Just as is the case today, they wrote doctrinal, apologetic, devotional, and hortatory material. In doing so they quoted, paraphrased, and alluded to both Old Testament and New Testament Scripture. These are referred to as the writings of the early church Fathers or the patristic writings, and as such they form an important group of witnesses to the text and its history. For example, by studying the manuscripts of Origen, Irenaeus, Justin, or Clement of Rome, we can determine the type of New Testament text they used, and the general time period when that text type was most prevalent in a particular area.

There are many of these quotations and allusions. In the nineteenth century, J.W. Burgon, a British textual scholar compiled a list of 86,489 quotations. The writings of the Fathers began as early as A.D. 95 with Clement of Rome. Sometimes these writers

would quote directly from the New Testament, identifying the authors. At other times they might paraphrase or allude to a passage familiar to both them and us. When scholars analyze the writings of the early Fathers, they must scrutinize those manuscripts and texts in the same way as they would the regular Bible manuscripts themselves. Since these ancient writers sometimes paraphrased, “quoted from memory,” or perhaps misquoted, the patristics are not really considered substantial witnesses to the text itself or useful in deciding between variant readings. When patristic evidence concerning a certain reading or variant stands alone, that reading must always be viewed with the gravest suspicion, but when it is a long quotation scholars assume that the writer was copying from a Bible codex which probably was much older. This type of quotation then is of greater value when one is in doing a text-critical analysis of a longer passage. So the scholar, when using patristic evidence, must exercise extreme caution.

As we will see later, even misquotations and inaccurate representations can be of great value in a critical study of the New Testament text and canon. For example, where there is supporting evidence for a reading contained in the patristics, that reading can be especially valuable in determining the general time and place where a certain text tradition was current, or where a certain reading was used. Furthermore, even when a writer misquotes a passage, the fact that he used it attests to the existence of the book from which it was cited, and it may also show something about whether or not the book was recognized as authoritative or considered canonical, and, when he identifies the author, it gives additional credence to the authorship of that book. Even the writings of known heretics can serve this positive purpose. This external evidence of the authenticity of a particular book is of great value in higher criticism.

The Apostolic Fathers

The men who wrote prior to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 are referred to as the Ante-Nicene Fathers, while those who wrote after that time are referred to as the Post-Nicene Fathers. The Ante-Nicene writers who lived closest to the apostolic age are referred to as the Apostolic Fathers. The writings of all of these men are collected into a set called the Migne Patrology (pronounced “mean”), containing both Latin and Greek writers. The standard critical text (showing variant readings) of the Greek Fathers is called the Berlin Corpus, and the collection of the Latin Fathers is called the Vienna Corpus. These collections and studies are such massive undertakings that neither of these collections is complete, but scholars are constantly working on them. See Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997) for more information on all of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

Some of the more important Apostolic Fathers are Clement of Rome (90-110), Ignatius (115), Hermas (140), Justin (140), and Polycarp (155). Other Ante-Nicene Fathers include Irenaeus (185), Clement of Alexandria (190), Origen (215), Tertullian (220), and Hippolytus (220). The dates given are approximate times when these men were thought to have done much of their writing. Below is information on a few of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

Clement of Rome (90-110).

The first epistle, bearing the name of Clement, has been preserved to us in a single manuscript only. Although very frequently referred to by ancient Christian writers, this epistle remained unknown to scholars until it was discovered in the Codex Alexandrinus.

Clement is considered by the Roman Catholic Church to have been the third Bishop of Rome or Pope. Although Paul refers to a Christian by the name of Clement in the Roman church (Phil. 4:3), there is no evidence of identity. Few details of Clement's life are known, but it is important to understand that he wrote a letter to the church in Corinth in which he reminded them that Paul had written to them to correct some of the problems at Corinth which remained unsolved. Clement quoted accurately from the book of I Corinthians. This gives evidence of the fact that (1) the book of I Corinthians was in existence in Clement's day, (2) it was recognized as being authoritative, (3) it was known to have been written by Paul, and (4) I Corinthians was circulating among churches, and was considered authoritative both within and outside of Corinth. Here is a sample of one of his many writings.

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you.

I Clement 47

Ignatius (115)

Almost nothing is known of Ignatius' early life. He was Bishop of Antioch, and under Emperor Trajan was condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts in Rome. The exact date of his death is not known. He was acquainted with Polycarp, and mentions him in some of his writings. It is interesting that among his writings was a letter to the church at Rome. In it there is no recognition of the authority of the Bishop of Rome, nor of his authority over the universal church.

Ignatius was among the first to write about the need to submit to the local presiding bishop, giving some detail about church life, doctrine, and church organization during the early second century. While traveling from Antioch to Rome to face martyrdom, he wrote five letters to churches along the way. Among them is his letter to the church at Ephesus. Here is a brief excerpt from that letter.

But inasmuch as love suffers me not to be silent in regard to you, I have therefore taken upon me first to exhort you that ye would run together in accordance with the will of God. For even Jesus Christ does all things according to the will of the Father, as He Himself declares in a certain place, "I do always those things that

please Him.” Wherefore it behooves us also to live according to the will of God in Christ, and to imitate Him as Paul did. For, says he, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” *Letter to the Ephesians*, Chapter 3.

Polycarp (69-155)

Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna (modern day Izmir, Turkey), and was martyred in that city at the age of 86. Little is known about his early life, but Irenaeus, a later Christian writer who was himself a student of Polycarp, stated that Polycarp had spoken to the Apostle John while John was living in Ephesus. It is generally thought however that this was John the Presbyter rather than the apostle. A letter which Polycarp wrote to the church in Philippi has survived, along with his letter to Ignatius of Antioch. Below is a brief excerpt from Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians.

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because ye have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter.

Letter to the Philippians, Chapter 3.

Justin Martyr (100-165).

Justin, along with a few of the other Apostolic Fathers, is referred to as an Apologist because he wrote in defense of Christianity against paganism. He was born to pagan parents in the ancient Samaritan city of Shechem (modern day Nablus, West Bank). In his day it had been rebuilt as a Roman city. Justin was devoted to Greek philosophy, and first encountered Christianity while in Ephesus. He believed that the Christian doctrine of the Logos (John 1:1-14) best explained the nature of things in light of Greek philosophy. He was martyred in Rome about A.D. 165. His *Apology* addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius dealt with such charges as Christians being atheists because they had no visible gods, and Christians practicing cannibalism in the Lord’s Supper. Here is an excerpt of some of his writings in which he gives a description of worship, as experienced in the second quarter of the second century.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

Apology, LXVII

Irenaeus (140-202)

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor where, as a child he heard the preaching of Polycarp. In 177 he became Bishop of Lyon, France. During his lifetime a strong controversy arose concerning the date of the celebration of Easter. Irenaeus wrote a strong letter of rebuke to Victor I, Bishop of Rome (189-199), for excommunicating the Christians of Asia Minor for observing Easter on what Victor considered the wrong date.

In 180 Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies*, a polemic against the Gnosticism of his day. His work was our main source of information about Gnosticism until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 which gave details of this heresy. The nature of Gnosticism and the controversy which arose concerning it offered opportunity for Irenaeus to discuss the nature of Christ, the incarnation, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and other important Christian teachings. Here is a brief excerpt from his writings.

Very properly, then, did he say, "In the beginning was the Word," for He was in the Son; "and the Word was with God," for He was the beginning; "and the Word was God," of course, for that which is begotten of God is God. "The same was in the beginning with God"-this clause discloses the order of production. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made; "for the Word was the author of form and beginning to all the Aeons that came into existence after Him. But "what was made in Him," says John, "is life." Here again he indicated conjunction; for all things, he said, were made *by* Him, but *in* Him was life.
Against Heresies, Chapter VIII.

These are just a few of the many early church writers. Some others include Papias (80-155), The Didache or Teaching of the Twelve (author unknown, 120), Theophilus of Antioch (115-188), Tertullian of Carthage (150-222), Cyprian of Carthage (200-258), and Clement of Alexandria (155-215), to list just a few.

Certain observations on these writings are in order. First, notice that they constantly refer to the writings of the apostles as an authoritative source of information and doctrine. Second, they expected their recipients to accept those writings as authoritative. Third, in some cases they quote directly, while in other cases they paraphrase or make allusions to writings which were familiar to their recipients and to us as well. Fourth, sometimes they identify the author and the source, showing that the person mentioned (*e.g.* Paul) was recognized as the author of the book cited.

The patristics then are very important, not only as evidence for the text itself, but also for the contribution they make to a better understanding of the collection and formation of the canon of Scripture as we have it today.

The chart on the following page shows a group of six of the Ante-Nicene Fathers indicating how many times they quoted, paraphrased, or alluded to New Testament Scriptures.

WRITER	GOSPELS	ACTS	GENERAL EPISTLES	PAULINE EPISTLES	REV.	TOTAL USAGE
Justin Martyr (AD 140)	268	10	6	43	3	330
Irenaeus (AD 185)	1038	194	23	499	65	1,819
Clement of Alex. (AD 190)	1017	44	207	1127	11	2,406
Origen (AD 215)	9231	349	399	7778	165	17,922
Tertullian (AD 220)	3822	502	120	2609	205	7,258
Hippolytus (AD 220)	734	42	27	387	188	1,378
TOTALS	16,110	1,141	782	12,443	637	31,113

This chart was originally compiled by Frank Pack, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California.

Conclusion

The patristic evidence is useful in substantiating the text of a reading, but it is not strong enough to stand alone. It is also useful in understanding which books were or were not considered canonical at any given period. The canon will be more fully discussed in a later chapter. One of the most valuable contributions of the patristic writings is the evidence they give concerning the authorship of various books of the New Testament.

The writings of the early church fathers can be found on numerous websites. One of these websites is: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com> which you might find useful. This website contains considerably more than just the church fathers. It also has many New Testament writings, apocryphal writings, pseudepigrapha, writings of heretics, etc.

Chapter 5

Ancient Versions of the Old Testament

Introduction

From very ancient times the Hebrew people placed a high value on the Holy Scriptures, which for them meant our Old Testament. Going back to the writing of Deuteronomy this view of the sacred writings was enshrined, and bred into the very fabric of the Hebrew nation. Moses charged the people with these words: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deut. 6:6-9. The story of their nation is the story of their sacred Scripture, its teaching, transmission, and translation. From the various translations of portions of the Jewish Bible, two will be given our very special attention.

The Samaritan Pentateuch

As stated in chapter 1, the Samaritan Pentateuch is not, strictly speaking, a version, because it is written in the Hebrew language, though its writing is a form of Old Canaanite or Phoenician script. The term, “Samaritan Pentateuch” does not refer to a single manuscript, but to a type of text contained in a number of manuscripts and fragments of the Pentateuch.

Before looking at the Samaritan Pentateuch it is important that we look briefly at the origin of the Samaritan people, along with the relationship and attitudes they manifested toward the Hebrews, and *vice versa*. In 722 B.C., the Assyrian army, under Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.), invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He died during the siege, and was followed by Sargon II. As was the Assyrian custom, Sargon deported those whom who were considered the “cream of the nation” – that is the highly skilled, the highly educated, and the very wealthy. According to the “Annals of Sargon II,” the Assyrians carried away 27,290 Israelites into their country, and then scattered them throughout his empire. This left the poor of the land and those who were looked upon as the dregs of Israelite society. In order to destroy any spirit of nationalism or national unity their conquerors imported similar classes of people from other vanquished nations and settled them among the Israelites. When we combine the accounts in the Annals of Sargon with the account in the Old Testament we see that these imported people were captives from ten different nations who were transplanted into Israel. Over time, the Israelites who were left in the land intermarried with the foreigners from various parts of the

vast Assyrian Empire, resulting in a mixed race of people in what had been the Kingdom of Israel. This mixed race of people came to be known as the Samaritans.

The Israelite element within this mixed race, though weak in its loyalty to God and now strongly infiltrated by foreign religious elements, attempted to maintain a semblance of worship of the God of Israel, but the pagan practices of those from other nations further polluted that worship.

In 633 B.C., a little less than 100 years after the fall of Samaria, Assurbanipal, then king of Assyria died and the empire began to deteriorate. In 616 and 615 B.C., Nabopolassar, the puppet king of the Babylonians under the domination of Assyria, tried to throw off the Assyrian yoke, but failed. A year later, assisted by the Medes, Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar and captain of his armies, attacked and destroyed Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. The siege began in 614 and Nineveh fell two years later. Nebuchadnezzar went on to capture Haran (in Syria), effectively destroying the Assyrian Empire, although there were pretender kings who tried to revive the corpse.

In 609 B.C., Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, feeling threatened by the advances of Nebuchadnezzar, tried to forestall this threat by marching his army northward to assist the new pretender king of the Assyrians in recapturing Haran from Nebuchadnezzar. He marched through Palestine toward his goal of Haran, but at Megiddo he fought the armies of Josiah, king of Judah. In this battle Josiah was killed. See II Kings 23:29-30.

About four years later, in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar met and decisively defeated Necho at the Battle of Carchemish (about 100 miles north of Damascus). Instead of bringing independence to Palestine, this chain of events resulted in a trade-off – Assyrian dominance was exchanged for Babylonian domination. While Nebuchadnezzar was at Carchemish, he received word of the death of his father, Nabopolassar, and returned home to become King of Babylon. Almost immediately the Kingdom of Judah became the vassal of Babylon, and because of the constant rebellion of the Jews against Babylon, in 587-586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem and destroyed it, burning the temple and taking captives away into exile.

The Babylonian empire lasted from about 615 until 539 B.C. Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus the king of Babylon, was actually ruling the empire as crown prince, but his reign was plagued by political extravagance and personal profligacy resulting in unrest and frustration for the people. Cyrus, king of the Persians saw this as his opportunity to take the city, and he succeeded in invading it without even fighting a battle. Daniel 5 tells of the drunken feast of Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall announcing the demise of his kingdom. Thus, Cyrus and the Persians replaced the Babylonians as the main force in the Middle East. In speaking of Cyrus' capture of Babylon, the Nabonidus Chronicle says: "The 16th day . . . the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle." The Persians were clearly in power, and Cyrus declared himself "king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon . . ."

Cyrus' policies and style of governing were quite different from those of either the Assyrians or the Babylonians. He believed that the best use of conquered lands and people was for the captured people to return to their own lands, work and prosper, and pay taxes into his treasury. Therefore he issued a decree which released the Jews and allowed them to return to their homeland. The Biblical account of these waves of returnees is found primarily in Ezra and Nehemiah.

As one would expect, when the Jews returned to their homeland they found some who had remained in the land during the Exile (the poor of the land, the uneducated, and the unskilled) along with many Samaritans. When the Samaritans offered to help in the rebuilding efforts they were sternly rebuffed by the returning exiles who told them that they had no part in this undertaking. A great deal of friction and bitterness arose between the Jews and Samaritans, continuing until the days of Jesus and beyond.

In about 330 B.C. the mixed population of Samaria succeeded in building a temple on Mt. Gerizim where they worshipped God, but historians generally agree that there was a strong commingling of pagan worship involved. The canonical Scripture for these Samaritans consisted of the Pentateuch, and they steadfastly refused to recognize the Prophets and Hagiographa (the "Writings") as canonical. From this situation two text traditions of the Pentateuch arose, one which came from the Samaritans and the other from the Jewish rabbis which later resulted in the work of the Masoretes. (The type of text which resulted from the work of the Masoretes was referred to as the Masoretic Text, abbreviated MT.)

The Samaritan Pentateuch has its own characteristics and peculiarities. The formation of the letters is different from the Hebrew letters. The Hebrew letters tend to be square while the Samaritan letters tend to be slanted. There are also important differences between the Samaritan text itself and the Hebrew text. There are thousands of variants, but the vast majority consists of insignificant orthographic variations which have nothing to do with the meaning of the text. Interestingly enough, for about two thousand of these variants, the Samaritan text agrees with the Septuagint against the Masoretic text. In addition, when Pentateuchal references occur in the New Testament they also frequently agree with the Samaritan text in places where it differs from the Masoretic text. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls produced fragments of the Pentateuch, the text of which usually agrees with the Samaritan text when variants occur between the Dead Sea material and the Masoretic text.

Theological differences between the Jews and the Samaritans resulted in certain intentional theological as well as historical emendations in the Samaritan text. These seem to reflect an intentional aim on the part of the Samaritan scribes. An example of this is the desire to protect the sanctity of Mt. Gerizim as God's choice rather than Mt. Ebal in a certain situation. Thus in Deut. 27:1-8 the Samaritan Pentateuch reads "Mt. Gerizim" rather than "Mt. Ebal" to be the location of an altar which God commanded to be built at the time of Israel's entry into the land. No doubt this is because of the Samaritans' reverence for Mt. Gerizim. In Deut. 12:5 the Masoretic text reads (as translated), "in the place the Lord your God *will* choose" while the Samaritan text reads "in the place the Lord your God *has chosen*." (Italics, J.B.) The interesting thing about this particular variant is

that at an earlier point in the Samaritan text the mountain in question has been located at Shechem which is Mt. Gerizim. This type of variant is called a harmonization, that is, where a word or phrase is changed to harmonize with a parallel idea in another place. In addition to this passage, there are about thirty-four cases where other harmonizations are found. In some instances, passages have been expanded with only a very short emendation, while others consist of the addition of a number of full lines.

It has become obvious to scholars that the Samaritan Pentateuch preserves a text tradition which is very ancient, and differs from that of the Masoretes. When allowances are made for obvious deliberate alterations, it has been demonstrated that the Samaritan Pentateuch has a text of great antiquity, and must be dealt with by Old Testament textual scholars.

Prior to 1815 the antiquity of the Samaritan text was vigorously debated. In that year, W. Gesenius published the first critical study of the text, and scholars began to look at the whole group of Samaritan manuscripts to more seriously evaluate the characteristics of the text. Gesenius concluded that the text type was of very ancient origin, going back to the pre-Christian era, and he noted groups of agreements between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint. This caused him to consider the Samaritan Pentateuch to be of limited text-critical value. He gave the Samaritan Pentateuch an overall negative evaluation, but his conclusions did not go unchallenged. In 1915, Peter Kahle advanced the theory that the Samaritan Pentateuch was an ancient popular text tradition which survived independently of the Jewish rabbinic text, later to be known as the Masoretic text. Qumran fragments of the Pentateuch, which were discovered later, demonstrated agreement with the Samaritan text, thus indicating that Kahle was correct in stating that the Samaritan text type is a pre-Masoretic text tradition.

The oldest extant manuscript of the Samaritan Pentateuch was probably not copied earlier than the tenth century, although claims are made by the small Samaritan community in present day Nablus (ancient Shechem) that at least one of its manuscripts is of much greater antiquity. In this manuscript there is a rather lengthy note stating that it was copied by Abisha, the great-grandson of Moses, in the thirteenth year after the conquest of Canaan. An abundance of paleographical data, including the script, the writing material (vellum), the ink, and the medieval appearance of the manuscript shows that it is probably from a time period not earlier than the tenth century A.D. All of the manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch are in codex form with the exception of three which are in the form of scrolls. One manuscript was dated by its scribe in A.D. 1211-12, and is now in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England which also houses a group of fragments of the Samaritan text.

The Septuagint

The translation and transmission of the text of the Old Testament cannot be separated from the vicissitudes of history. One would probably not have considered the conquests of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) to materially affect the translation and distribution of the sacred Jewish Scriptures, yet his intensive spread of Greek culture and the Greek language brought changes which necessitated a Jewish response. As Alexander's conquests began, the Mediterranean nations were the first to feel the force of the Greeks.

They adopted much of Greek cultural and religious practices, and the Greek language became not only the language of culture, commerce, and religion, but also the *lingua franca* of the rapidly expanding empire. The conquest of Egypt and the founding of the city of Alexandria assured the spread of Greek influence into just about every aspect of Egyptian life, and the city became a sort of cultural Athens of Egypt. One of the finest libraries of the ancient world was established at Alexandria.

About 250 years before Alexander the Great, the Babylonians had invaded Palestine (587-86 B.C.) The Jewish people were hopelessly divided as to whether they should resign themselves to a life of exile in Babylon, or attempt to flee to Egypt, a country which some thought might overcome Babylonian power. Taking Jeremiah as their captive, many Hebrews fled to Egypt, settling at Elephantine, a small island at the first cataract on the Nile River near the modern day city of Aswan. After Alexandria was founded, a rather large contingent of Jews migrated to that city and established its own educational and religious institutions there.

The universal use of the Greek language was overwhelming even to the Jews, who generally tended to insulate themselves from non-Jewish religions, cultures, and languages. Two important components came together which gave birth to the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament (abbreviated LXX). These were (1) Jewish interaction with people of other nations throughout the Diaspora, and (2) the fear that their children would not learn the sacred Scriptures using their native Hebrew tongue. Although the LXX was translated in Egypt, its use was not confined to that country. Very early in the history of Christianity, it became the Bible for both Jews and Christians throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond.

There are several legendary stories about the origin of the Septuagint, each probably having a kernel of truth. One of the best known of these is based on a letter of a man named Aristeas during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.), ruler of Egypt. Ptolemy supposedly heard of the Jewish Scriptures and was urged by his librarian to obtain a copy for the great library in Alexandria. Lavish gifts were sent to the high priest in Jerusalem urging him to provide a copy of the Jewish sacred books, along with a group of translators. Upon receiving the request, six translators were selected from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, seventy-two in all, and sent to Alexandria with a copy of the Pentateuch. After an extravagant reception by King Ptolemy, these visiting Jewish scholars were divided up and began their work, comparing their results, and finally producing the work referred to as the Septuagint (from the Latin *septuaginta* meaning seventy).

Although this is a legendary story, it is relatively certain that the translation took place about 250 B.C., or possibly a little earlier, and that it originated among the Jewish authorities in Alexandria. Although the letter of Aristeas asserts that it was produced by Palestinian Jews, scholars are in agreement that it is the work of Hellenistic Jews, and that its objective was to provide Scriptures for the general use of the Jewish people, not merely to serve as a contribution to the Alexandrian library. Properly, the word Septuagint referred originally only to the Torah or Law, but by 150 B.C. the Prophets were added, and a little later Hagiographa. By the time of Jesus the LXX had become the Bible of the

Jewish people all over the Mediterranean world, and it was also used by the early Christians and the early church fathers.

Another interesting linguistic phenomenon was also taking place among the Palestinian Jews. During the Babylonian Exile the captive Jews were forced to adopt the Aramaic language, and under Persian rule it became the language of the people rather than just the language of international commerce and diplomacy. By the first century of the Christian era this transition was about complete and the “Hebrew” spoken by Jesus and the apostles was in fact the Jewish form of Aramaic. On the other hand, ancient Hebrew remained the language of the sacred books, and it was this which was read in public worship and was employed by some of the rabbis, students, and scribes of Jesus’ day. Kenyon calls attention to the fact that some of the discoveries made in the Dead Sea caves show that ancient Hebrew could not be considered a dead language at this time.

All of the books of the New Testament were written in Greek, and most of the New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are from the Septuagint rather than from the original Hebrew. Nevertheless, Matthew quotes thirty-two times from a text which is more closely aligned with the Hebrew than with any known manuscript of the LXX.

As the Septuagint became the Bible of the first century Christians it also became an object of controversy between the Jews and Christians. In some instances when the Septuagint Old Testament was quoted in support of Christianity, particularly with reference to the Messiahship of Jesus, accusations of misquotation or mistranslation were levied by the Jews. Many of the Jews then began to look at the LXX with suspicion.

By the end of the first Christian century steps began to be taken to reemphasize the use of the Hebrew Old Testament. The influence of Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph (A.D. 50-135) and his support of the Jewish leader Simon Bar Kokhba at the time of the Jewish rebellion of A.D. 132-135 further advanced this reaffirmation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Akiba ben Joseph believed that every word and every letter of the Hebrew text was sacred and of the utmost importance. By contrast, the perceived looseness of the LXX was rapidly becoming a problem, leading the Jews to set it aside in favor of the Hebrew text. For the most part the Septuagint ceased to be copied by the Jews, and has been preserved almost exclusively as part of Christian manuscripts. Two fragments of Deuteronomy and possibly a few others from the Dead Sea discoveries may be considered exceptions to this. Kenyon says, “Indeed the Greek Bible of the Alexandrian Jews before the Christian era is, as one eminent scholar has said, ‘an unknown entity.’” (F.G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 102.)

Not only was the Septuagint copied into New Testament manuscripts such as the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Alexandrinus, but Origen (A.D. 185-253), one of the most prolific writers among the early church fathers incorporated it in his *Hexapla*. This consisted of the Old Testament in six columns of text. It was made up of (1) the Hebrew text then in current use (similar to the Masoretic text), (2) the Hebrew text transliterated into Greek characters, (3) the Old Testament Greek translation of Aquila, (4) the Old Testament

translation of Symmachus, (5) the Septuagint as revised by Origen himself, and (6) the translation of Theodotion.

The magnitude of the project is difficult for us to conceive. According to Eberhard Nestle's calculation the entire work would have occupied more than 6,000 leaves or 12,000 pages. The original manuscript was placed in the library of Pamphilus in Caesarea where Origen had lived after he left Alexandria. Unfortunately the library was destroyed in the seventh century by the Moslems when they entered Caesarea. The writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340), Epiphanius (315-403), and Jerome (347-420) tell us about some of Origen's massive undertaking. In 1896 Cardinal Giovanni Mercati discovered a palimpsest manuscript of the tenth century in the Ambrosian library in Milan, Italy. This was the first continuous fragment of the *Hexapla* ever discovered. It contained portions of the Psalms. A few other fragments have come to light, and are now in museums at Cambridge and elsewhere. Specific columns of the *Hexapla*, particularly that which contained the LXX (column 5), have been copied into separate manuscripts. One of these is the Codex Sarravianus containing the Pentateuch and portions of Joshua and Judges. This manuscript probably dates from the fifth century A.D..

Manuscripts of the Septuagint

No manuscript of the Septuagint has emerged from the discoveries of the Dead Sea materials, although readings in some of those scrolls often coincide with the text of the LXX. Emanuel Tov of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem has recently written, "Some of the Hebrew scrolls from Qumran often coincide with a textual tradition of the LXX. But no scroll has yet been found which coincides in most of its deviations from the MT with a single Greek tradition, and no single Greek tradition agrees in most of its deviations from the MT with a Hebrew scroll from Qumran." (Emanuel Tov, "Septuagint," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 809.) No manuscripts of the LXX, except those included with the New Testament text, are earlier than the ninth century although it is evident that the text itself is of considerably greater antiquity. This is particularly attested by the presence of the Septuagint in the Greek manuscripts containing the New Testament, in particular the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus.

Portions of the LXX are found in all three types of manuscripts previously described, *i.e.* the papyri, uncials, and minuscules. There are many papyrus fragments, some large, others very small containing small portions of the Septuagintal text, but most of them have little text-critical value. The vellum uncials extend from the fourth to the tenth century, and the minuscules from the ninth until the fifteenth century.

Some of the vellum uncials are extensive in content; a few of those will be mentioned here. As stated above, the two most notable uncials are the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Alexandrinus which contain almost the entire Old Testament. The text of current editions of the LXX is derived primarily from these manuscripts. Portions of the Septuagintal text, about sixty-four leaves, are to be found in the Codex Ephraemi. Since this is a palimpsest much of the text is illegible. The Codex Sarravianus is a very fine manuscript

probably dating to the early fifth century, although some scholars believe it comes from the late fourth. One hundred thirty leaves of this manuscript are in Leyden, The Netherlands, twenty-two in Paris, and one in St. Petersburg, Russia. It contains portions of the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges. Its special characteristic is that it contains Origen's Hexaplar text.

In addition to a good number of uncials, there are numerous minuscules which contain portions of the LXX. Some have only the Pentateuch, others just the Psalms, some only the Prophets, and still others just the Hagiographa.

Comparison of the text tradition of the Septuagint and that of the Masoretic Text is a continuing study. At times the LXX displays an Aramaic or Hebrew text which is different from the MT. As mentioned above, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls brought to light considerable agreement between the readings of the Scrolls and the readings in the LXX against the MT. This led some scholars to give the LXX preferential treatment when it differed from the MT, while others have moved in the opposite direction. Some believe that such differences of opinions among scholars may be influenced by religious prejudice. In any event, it is certain that the study of the relationships of the Septuagintal text and that of the Masoretes will be a continuing endeavor of scholars for the foreseeable future.

The present state of our knowledge does not give any substantial reason to abandon the Masoretic Text in favor of the Septuagint. Generally in textual criticism, versions are not considered to be the primary witnesses, but are given secondary and supportive roles. Preference is given to the original language unless there is substantial reason to deviate from this. There is no reason to make a general substitution of the Greek for the Hebrew as the primary witness to the text, and scholars do not anticipate anything coming to light which may alter this stance.

Chapter 6

The Syriac Version

Introduction

Syriac was the language spoken by the people of ancient Syria and Mesopotamia. It was a Semitic tongue which was very close to the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and was also referred to as Aramaic. Eastern Aramaic was distinguished from the closely related Western Aramaic which was spoken in Palestine and which came to be the language of Jesus. The northern Kingdom of Israel was taken captive into Mesopotamia in 722 B.C. when Samaria fell to the Assyrians, and the southern Kingdom of Judah was taken to Babylon in 587-586 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants captive. Thus the entire nation came under the influence of the Syriac language.

Syriac had become the language of international commerce, trade, and diplomacy under the Babylonians, but during the time the Persian Empire (539-331 B.C.) it also became the language of the common man. Certain portions of the Old Testament book of Daniel were written in Aramaic, and the Jews returning from the captivity spoke a form of Aramaic. By the time of Jesus it was in general use in Palestine, although it differed somewhat from that which was spoken in Mesopotamia. When Acts 2 speaks of "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia" being in Jerusalem on Pentecost, it is speaking of those who were part of the Parthian Empire, beyond strict Roman control. F.F. Bruce says that there were millions of such Jews in the first century. (See F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 191.) Although Greek was also used throughout this area following the conquests of Alexander the Great, still the mother tongue of these nationalities was a form of Syriac.

Almost nothing is known about the Christian evangelization of these regions, but the presence on Pentecost of Jews from those parts almost certainly means that they took the gospel message back to their home countries. Some legends and traditions speak of Thaddaeus as the apostle who evangelized some of the Mesopotamian countries, but we have almost no confirmation of this. Of course we know that the book of Acts gives information concerning the gospel being taken to Damascus and Antioch in the western part of Syria, but the details of the east are still unknown.

During the early part of the second century Edessa became the center of Christianity for all Mesopotamia, and from this area the gospel went to foreign lands as far as India and China, and along the trade routes from Baghdad to Peking. As the Syrian church was of great importance in evangelization, so also the Syriac version of the Bible became equally important. There are five versions of the Syriac Bible which will be discussed in this

chapter. They are the Old Syriac, the Peshitta (or common version), the Philoxenian, the Harclean, and the Palestinian Version. They were translated during the first six centuries of the Christian era.

The Old Syriac

It is not known whether this version was produced by Syrian Christians or Syrian speaking Jews who had been converted to Christianity. Ancient records show that the gospel reached the regions of Mesopotamia through these Jewish converts, and thus the need arose to have the Scriptures in their own vernacular.

The Old Syriac Version has not survived in Acts and the epistles of Paul, but only in the four Gospels, preserved in two famous, but incomplete manuscripts. Both have rather large gaps in the text. One of these, now in the British Library, was analyzed, described, and published by William Cureton in 1858, and became known as the Curetonian Syriac. A second manuscript, known as the Sinaitic Syriac, is a palimpsest which was discovered in 1892 by Agnes Smith Lewis and her twin sister Mrs. Gibson, when they visited the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. Both of these sisters taught at Cambridge University. These two manuscripts come to us from the fifth and fourth centuries, respectively, but the form of text which they preserve is closer to the second or beginning of the third century. Each of these manuscripts, contain about three-fourths of the Gospels. Their text forms an odd mixture of Western type readings, some Alexandrian readings, and some Caesarean type (These will be more fully discussed in a later chapter.)

The Peshitta

The Peshitta version was, and still is, the common version of Scripture in the Syrian language. The word "Peshitta," meaning "common or simple," was not used to identify this version until about the ninth century. We have numerous manuscripts of the Peshitta, the most ancient of which is in the British Library, and contains portions of the Old Testament Pentateuch. An additional one hundred or so copies are also in the British Library, and a total of about two hundred fifty copies of this version are now extant, housed in museums and libraries throughout Europe and Asia.



**Peshitta
Syriac**

**Codex
Yonan**

**7th
Century**

Between 411 and 431, Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa ordered a new translation of the Scripture to be placed in every church, replacing the Diatessaron (see below). His biographer says that he undertook this project because there were so many variations in the existing texts, and affirms that Rabbula's work was carried out with great accuracy. F.F. Bruce says, "Together with the Christian recension of the Syriac Old Testament Rabbula's revision of the New Testament constitutes the *Peshitta*, which from his time to our own has remained the 'authorized version' of the Bible in the Syriac Churches." (F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Third Revised edition; Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1963), p. 194.) Rabbula's translation did not receive immediate acceptance however, and even he himself continued to use the Old Syriac and Diatessaron in some of his work. From his time forward, however, we begin to have evidence of the widespread use of this translation, ultimately to be known as the *Peshitta*. It should be noted that some scholars take a different view of the origin of the *Peshitta* than that expressed by Bruce. The full story of its origin is still an open question. Although it is considered of little value in restoring the original text of the New Testament, it is of great value in understanding the particular type of text it contains. For example, when comparing it with the Isaiah scroll from the Dead Sea caves the Scrolls reveal many strong affinities with the *Peshitta*, and also kinship with the LXX.

The Philoxenian

The ancient Syrians were known for their efforts at retranslating the Bible. In 485, Philoxenus became bishop of Mabbug, a city situated in the northwestern part of Syria just south of the Turkish border. In about 508 he and others worked together to make a translation of the New Testament and the Psalms. Their work was based on the Greek text. This version has survived only in fragments, some of which are the shorter epistles and Revelation.

The Harkleian Revision

In 616, Thomas of Harkel began a revision of the Philoxenian version which has come to be known as the Harkleian Revision. Although this is considered a separate revision, little attempt has been made to separate the elements of Thomas' work from that of Philoxenus. Although Thomas of Harkel was from Mesopotamia, his work was done in Alexandria where he obtained Greek manuscripts from the Monastery of Enaton nearby. One of the great values of this translation is that it is very literal. Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary makes an interesting observation. "During the sixth century, for the first time in the history of the Syriac-speaking churches, the minor Catholic Epistles and Revelation were translated into Syriac." (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Fourth edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 99.) The expression, "Catholic Epistles" refers to the seven short epistles from James through Jude which are universal or general in that they are not addressed to a particular individual or church.

The Palestinian

This version has not survived in any continuous form, but only in a few fragments. It is in a dialect which some scholars believe may have been spoken in Palestine during the time of Christ, and is similar to that found in the Jerusalem Talmud. The Talmud is a body of Jewish civil and religious law, including commentaries on the Torah or Pentateuch. The Jerusalem Talmud dates back to the third century A.D. The Palestinian Syriac is now known only in some Syriac lectionaries. The version itself is thought to have originated in the sixth century. Portions of most of the books of the New Testament are extant, with a mixed text, at times leaning toward the Western type, and at other times toward the Caesarean. The importance of this version is that it is the only New Testament version known to exist in the Palestinian dialect.

The Syriac Old Testament

Our knowledge of the origin of the translation of the Old Testament into the Syriac language is very scant indeed. There is almost no external evidence concerning its origin, although there is evidence of the early existence of a Jewish community near Edessa, Syria. The troubling part is that we don't know if the community ever made a translation of the Old Testament Scriptures. With the relatively wide distribution of the Septuagint it would not be surprising if the Syrian-Jewish community relied on it rather than making a translation of its own. Evidence from the text itself and comments by Jacob of Edessa and Ephraim Syrus show that it was certainly not the work of just one translator. For example, one translator consistently used the same words to translate certain original words in Psalms, Daniel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, but in Ezekiel and the Twelve Prophets (books from Hosea to Malachi) where the same words occur in the original, various synonyms are used in the translation. When making an observation on this fact, T.H. Robinson says, "It is hardly possible that one translator would have been so consistent in his inconsistencies." (T.H. Robinson, "The Syriac Bible," in *The Bible in its Ancient and English Versions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1954, p.88.)

Another Syriac translation of the Old Testament was made by Paul, Bishop of the Mesopotamian city of Tella in about 616. This is not a translation from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint column of Origen's Hexapla. It is therefore known as the Syro-Hexaplar text. It has been labeled as "slavishly literal," partly because it did not make allowance for the Syriac idiom creating a very stiff translation, and one which did not communicate the sense of the original text. Consequently it never really took root with the Syriac churches. The fact that it was so literal however makes it valuable for scholars today for it becomes an excellent witness for Hexaplaric text of the Septuagint.

Probably the Hebrew rather than the Septuagint was the original base for the translation, but the Septuagintal influence cannot be overlooked. Quotations from the Old Testament which are cited in the New Testament show a kinship with the LXX, further complicating the problem. There are many complexities to almost every aspect of study regarding the history of the Syriac Old Testament.

In general the manuscripts of the Syriac Old Testament have the same books as the Septuagint although there are some exceptions. The arrangement of the books is also similar in the two versions, but at times they both differ from the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

Another difficulty has to do with the date of the translation of the Syriac Old Testament. Though the earliest manuscripts come to us from the fifth century, there are quotations from Ephraim Syrus which show that he used this version of the Old Testament in writing his commentary. Ephraim died in 373, but in his commentary he called attention to the wide distribution of the Syriac Old Testament in his own day. He also mentioned various words in the translation which had become obscure at the time he was writing, and required extensive comment and definition. Scholars are in general agreement that this version of the Old Testament goes back to the first or second century of the Christian era.

Certain manuscripts of the Syrian text of the Old Testament show less influence from the LXX. Some of these are currently in the British Library, most of which were obtained from the Monastery of St. Mary Diepara in Egypt. One of these manuscripts bears a date corresponding to 464 A.D. which makes it the oldest Bible manuscript bearing a date. The Codex Ambrosianus at Milan, which comes out of the sixth or seventh century says that the Psalms in this manuscript were translated from the Palestinian language into Hebrew, from Hebrew into Greek, and from Greek into Syriac. Scholars agree that the Syriac Old Testament is second only to the LXX in its general value as a witness to the text of the Old Testament. However its value varies from one book to another because of different translators.

Tatian's Diatessaron

The church had four separate accounts of various activities of Jesus. These four books came to be known as the Gospels because, as the word indicates, they formed the basis of the "good news." Each one was written in a different part of the world, to fulfill a different purpose. They are not written as biographies, but as four brief collections of teach-

ings and events in the Lord's life. Although they are roughly chronological in arrangement, chronology is not the primary goal of the writers. These four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give us basically all we know about the life of Christ. This knowledge was so vital to the early church that these books were collected and circulated at a rather early date. (See the chapter on formation of the canon.)

The first three Gospels have been called the Synoptics because a considerable amount of their material is held in common, sometimes even to the very words being used from one Gospel to the other. The Gospel of John is quite different, dealing with other aspects and events in the life of Christ, and it does not share an account of many of the events that are contained in the Synoptics. John's purpose is different from the Synoptics as also is his content.

Shortly after the middle of the second century a controversial Syrian named Tatian merged these four accounts of the life of Christ into a sort of harmony referred to as the Diatessaron, from the Greek expression **dia tessarwn**, (*dia tessaron*) meaning "through [the] four." He did this by weaving the four narratives into a single narrative.

Tatian was born about A.D. 110, in an area of the Euphrates valley. He traveled widely, and was converted to Christianity while in Rome. During his residence there he became a disciple of Justin Martyr and wrote strong defenses of Christianity against the Greeks. After the martyrdom of Justin, in about 165, Tatian was charged with heresy because of his extreme ascetic views, and he returned to his native land. He died in about 180. The exact location of his birth and death are not known. The time of his compilation of the Diatessaron is not known for certain, nor is it known if this work was completed while he was in Rome or after he returned to Mesopotamia. Scholars are divided on the question of the original language of the Diatessaron, but we know that it did exist in the Syriac, whether or not that was its original language. Some contend that its original language was Greek.

In the fifth century, Theodoret, who became bishop of the Syrian city of Cyrrhus in 423, found that many copies of the Diatessaron were in use in his diocese. Fearing that, since Tatian had become heretical in his later years, the Diatessaron might corrupt his flock he ordered all copies destroyed. This resulted in the destruction of about 200 copies. Rabula, at about the same time ordered that all churches under his jurisdiction replace their Scriptures with his own translation, resulting in further destruction of copies of the Diatessaron. As a result of these efforts, and, no doubt of those of other zealous clergy, we have no copy of the Diatessaron in its original Syriac language. However, as noted above, Ephraim Syrus wrote a commentary on the Diatessaron, and we have an Armenian translation of that work. Shortly after the publication of that translation in 1888, two copies of an Arabic translation of the Diatessaron came to light and were published. In fact, the Diatessaron was translated into many different languages and distributed to many different countries. The abundance of such translations and versions provides scholars with very fine material to reconstruct the Diatessaron. Indeed, manuscripts of this work have been discovered in Arabic, Persian, Latin, medieval Italian, Old High German, Middle English, medieval French, and medieval Dutch.

In 1933, J.H. Breasted, an American archaeologist, and Franz Cumont, a French archaeologist excavated the site of an ancient Roman fortress at Dura-Europos on the lower Euphrates River, and discovered a small fragment written in Greek, which was later determined to be a portion of the Diatessaron. Historians know that this fortress fell to the Persians under King Shapur I in A.D. 256-7, so the fragment can confidently be dated prior to that time. Further analysis of this vellum fragment indicated that it dates in the first half of the third century. The fact that this fragment is in Greek, in conjunction with other things, has led some scholars to believe that Tatian's work was originally done in Greek, and translated into Syriac. Although for some scholars, the original language of the Diatessaron is still an open question, most are satisfied that Tatian originally produced his work in Syriac. Carl H. Kraeling of Yale University analyzed and published this fragment in 1935. The fourteen lines of this fragment are John's account of the petition of Joseph of Arimathea for the body of Jesus following the crucifixion. An interesting observation here is that within these fourteen lines, all four Gospels are employed.

Conclusion

The Syrian church was among the most active in ancient times in its zeal to spread the story of redemption in Christ, and it clearly saw that this goal could be reached only by having the Bible in the language of its people. The Syriac version is found in a number of different translations and forms, and enjoyed massive circulation. This fact adds to the scholar's ability to use this material in the reconstruction of the original text of the New Testament. Each of these components makes its own unique contribution to our knowledge of the history of the transmission and dissemination of the text.

Chapter 7

The Egyptian and Latin Versions

Introduction

The countries of North Africa were evangelized very early in the history of Christianity. Acts 2 mentions Jews and proselytes who had come to Jerusalem from at least two African countries, namely Egypt and Libya. In addition, early writings indicate a strong contingent of Christians in these and many other African nations. Alexandria, Egypt was certainly among the areas which received the gospel early on, for we have Apollos mentioned in Acts 18:24 as an Alexandrian who knew the baptism of John, and that city is mentioned in early patristic writings. In addition, Acts 8 speaks of the conversion of the Ethiopian treasurer. Ancient Egyptian Church legend has it that Mark was the one who evangelized Egypt, although the actual historical evidence for this is lacking.

The Coptic Versions

The word “Coptic” is frequently used when referring to the Egyptian languages. It comes from the Greek word **Αιγυπτος** (*aiguptos*) which means “Egyptian,” and refers to all of the Egyptian dialects. In the outlying areas of Egypt the Sahidic and Bohairic dialects were predominant, and it soon became evident that a translation of the Bible into these two major dialects was essential. A lesser known dialect referred to as Oxyrhynchite has also come to light, and has made some noteworthy contributions to the study of the history of the text. The Oxyrhynchite is also known as the Middle Egyptian dialect.

The Egyptian versions of the Bible, mainly the Bohairic and Sahidic, probably date from the very late second or perhaps mid-third century. In Lower Egypt (the Northern section of the country), the Bohairic dialect of Coptic was spoken while in Upper Egypt (the Southern section) the Sahidic dialect was used. Egyptian hieroglyphics remained predominant for many centuries, and those written Coptic languages were relatively new on

the scene. It is not known just when and how the evolution of these languages or dialects occurred, but the oldest evidence we have of the Bohairic and Sahidic scripts comes from an old secular papyrus fragment dated about A.D. 95-135. The evidence points to the probability that by the year 200 this script was well established and stabilized.

Scholars generally believe that the Sahidic Version of the Bible was translated about A.D. 250, but was somewhat short-lived because the Bohairic superseded it. F.G. Kenyon believes it is possible that a Coptic version (either Sahidic or Bohairic) might have existed somewhat earlier than this. "By or soon after the end of the second century it is probable that the first Coptic version had been made." (Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 233.) Ultimately, the Arabic language replaced both the Sahidic and Bohairic dialects when the Muslims conquered these regions.

The complexity of the Coptic scripts (both the Sahidic and Bohairic) led to their being superseded by an alphabetic script based on the Greek letters plus seven signs taken from the simpler hieroglyphic script of the native Egyptians. All of the Coptic Christian works, including the Bible, use this alphabet. Coptic died out as a spoken language about the sixteenth century, but it still remains the official language of the Coptic Church. The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York acquired a large collection of Coptic manuscripts, most of which are complete. Some of these are Sahidic and others Bohairic.

The Bohairic Version

The Bohairic, the dialect of the northern portion of Egypt, was the more literary of the two predominant Coptic dialects, and ultimately crowded out the Sahidic which was used only in the south (Upper Egypt). Since Alexandria was one of the strong centers of learning in the ancient Mediterranean world it is generally thought that its influence may have played an important role in the dominance of the Bohairic over the Sahidic. At one time the Bohairic version of the Bible was referred to as the *Memphitic* version, named after the important Egyptian city of Memphis, but this designation is no longer used.

Over one hundred Bohairic manuscripts are extant, some containing complete books of the Bible, but none of these contain the entire New Testament. Almost all are of a late date, the earliest complete Gospel codex being dated in 1174. However, there are exceptions. For example, there is a manuscript in "semi-Bohairic" which comes from the fourth or early fifth century containing portions of the book of Philippians.

The Bohairic, more than either the Latin or Syriac, is a substantially pure text when compared with the Greek. It is thought that the Jews around Alexandria might have had some influence on this, since their tradition of reverence for Scripture and accuracy of copying could have been felt. It is interesting that the long ending to Mark 16 is found in all extant Bohairic manuscripts which contain the book of Mark. The Bohairic text reflects the Neutral or Alexandrian type as F.J.A. Hort would classify them. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

The Sahidic Version

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that this version received much attention from scholars. This is also known as the Thebiac version since Thebes was the main city of the region of Upper (southern) Egypt. A few fragments of the version were published posthumously in 1799 from the work of Charles G. Woide, a Polish born scholar working with the British Museum and Oxford University. The Sahidic version probably originated around 250, and it exists in a large group of fragments which date fairly early. By using these fragments in conjunction with each other, scholars have been able to assemble almost the entire New Testament in this version. George Horner, a British scholar, led the way in this endeavor. Many of these fragments go back as early as the fourth century. In 1911, the British Museum acquired a manuscript of the Sahidic Version containing the New Testament book of Acts and the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Jonah which can be accurately dated as early as the first half of the fourth century. It is now in the British Library. Another manuscript was discovered by J.L. Starkey in 1923 which contains a copy of John, and dates probably in the second half of the fourth century.



Manuscript of the Sahidic Version

The real importance of both the Sahidic and Bohairic Versions is that their text type reflects the Neutral or Alexandrian as classified by Hort, and contained in **a** (Codex Sina-

iticus) and B (Codex Vaticanus). However, some Western readings are also supported by this version.

Latin Versions

The Latin versions basically divide themselves into two broad categories. They are the Old Latin, and the Vulgate. Of these two, the Vulgate is considered the most important, even though it was really the successor to the Old Latin. The Old Latin, in the Old Testament, was translated from the Septuagint while the Vulgate Old Testament was translated directly from the Hebrew, but with comparisons made with the Septuagint. Therefore, when considering the Old Testament, the Vulgate is more useful in restoring the primitive text. On the other hand, the Old Latin was translated long before most of our Greek manuscripts were written. Thus the Old Latin takes us back to within a generation or two of the composition of the original New Testament documents. Unfortunately, we possess only a few manuscripts of the Old Latin compared to the many manuscripts extant of the Vulgate.

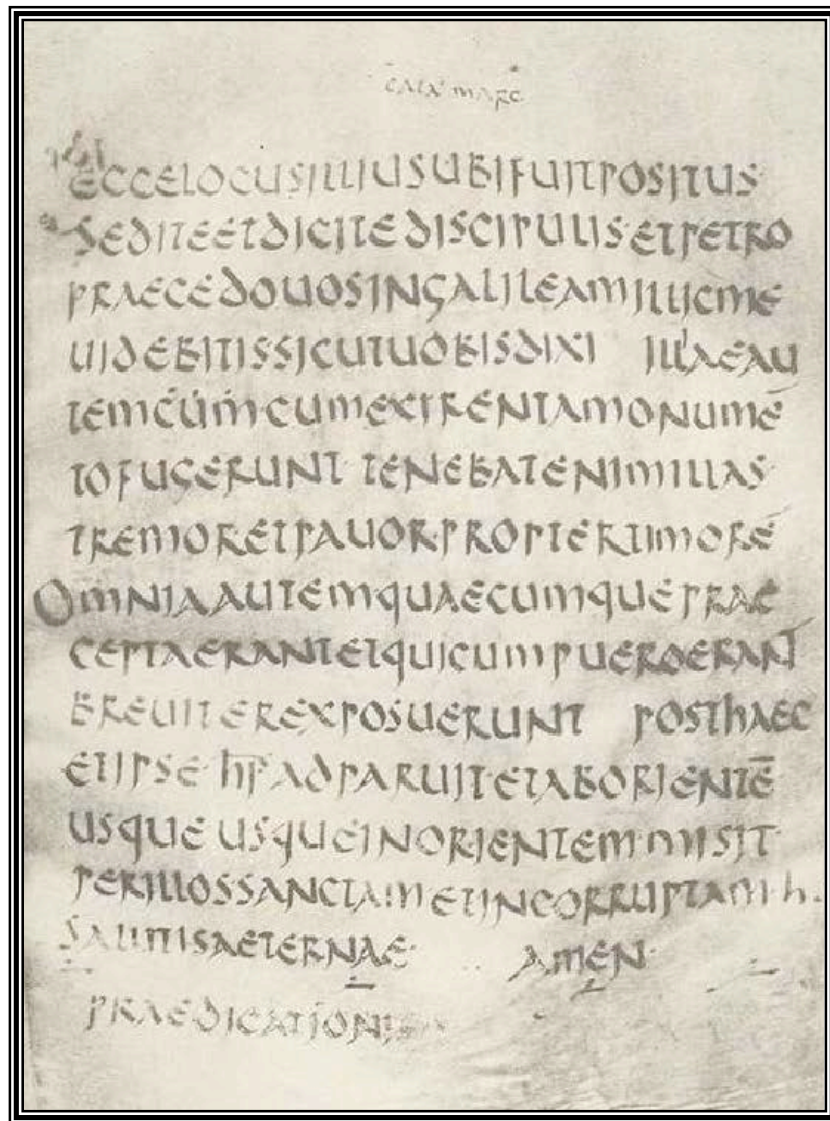
The Old Latin Version

Christianity reached Rome at a very early date, perhaps from those “sojourners from Rome both Jews and proselytes” in Acts 2. The language of Rome at that time was more Greek than Latin, however. Clement of Rome, who wrote in about A.D. 96, used Greek. The first theological treatises we have written in Latin came from Victor I, Bishop of Rome, in A.D. 190. It would be a mistake however to suppose that Latin was in little use in first century Rome. Certainly in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of that city and its hinterland, Latin was spoken by just about everyone, though Greek seems to have been equally important, particularly in reference to the New Testament and other Christian writings.

As Christianity moved into other parts of Italy, Latin was the *lingua franca* of those people. In North Africa, along the Mediterranean shore, Latin was the predominate language, and it is in this area, rather than Rome, that we have our earliest evidence of the Latin Bible. This Old Latin Version is one of the earliest translations of the New Testament, probably coming to us from the early to mid-second century, and was, no doubt, translated in Africa rather than in Rome as one might first suspect. No entire manuscript of the Old Testament has survived in the Old Latin, and only a few complete books are extant. In the New Testament, this version has survived primarily in the Patristics writings. The first of the early Fathers to use it was Tertullian, in about A.D. 220. Our most complete witness of the Old Latin however, comes from Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in about A.D. 258.

Usually three main families or rescissions of the Old Latin are identified. They are the African, the European, and the Italian, taking their designations from the general area of their origin or the area of their greatest circulation. These identifications come primarily from the Patristics writings, particularly in the writings of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage who gave us many quotations from the African Old Latin Version. The Latin translation

of the works of Irenaeus of Lyons (end of the second century) gave us many quotations from the European Old Latin. The works of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) give us quotations from the Italian Old Latin text. The African text is not restricted to the African continent, but is known to have been in use in parts of Europe, particularly in Spain. The designation of these three families is not recognized and used by all scholars, and probably is not as significant as once thought. The absence of strong family characteristics in each of the individual rescissions has caused some scholars, though not all, to discount the importance of those designations.



**Codex Babiensis, Latin k
3rd Century**

Because the Vulgate eventually superseded the Old Latin in the Western church, Old Latin manuscripts are scarce, but when one is found it is generally very old. There are no manuscripts of this version containing the entire New Testament, and only a few which contain even an entire book of the New Testament.

Manuscripts of the Old Latin are designated by an italicized lowercase letter. Two important extant manuscripts of the Old Latin are the Codex Vercellensis, designated as “a,” containing the four Gospels in the Western order, Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark. This unique manuscript is written in silver ink on very thin vellum dyed purple. According to an old tradition, it was written by Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli, who was martyred in 370. This makes it one of the oldest extant manuscripts of any version, and it is also as old as our oldest extant Greek uncials.

The Codex Bobiensis, designated as “k,” is also one of the most important Old Latin manuscripts we have, coming from about A.D. 400. It contains the last half of Mark and the first half of Matthew, and is, unfortunately, very fragmentary.

The Latin side of the fifth century bilingual Codex Bezae (D) also preserves the Old Latin Version, though it has undergone some correction from the Greek side of the manuscript. The Latin part of the Codex Bezae is designated “d.”

The Vulgate

The Old Latin went through much copying and distribution, but by A.D. 382 Damasus, Bishop of Rome, saw the need for a new Latin translation, and he commissioned Jerome, a very well qualified scholar of his day, to do the work. At the age of 28, Jerome had set his mind to learn Hebrew, an unusual undertaking for anyone in the West, and selected as his teacher a Jewish rabbi who had converted to Christianity.

Within a year after he had received the commission to make the translation, Jerome was able to present his work on the four Gospels to Damasus. In a cover letter, Jerome explained that he had used good Latin translations as a base, comparing them with some old Greek manuscripts. He explained that his use of the Latin was very conservative, and that he compared it diligently with the Greek. Jerome’s work on the entire Bible was done in pieces. He first revised the Old Latin Version of the Psalms, reworking it by using both the Septuagint and the Hebrew text. The final product on the Psalms came to be known as the *Hebrew Psalter*.

While he was working on the Psalms he was also busy translating other parts of the Old Testament, using the Hebrew text as his base. He worked on this from about 390 to 404, publishing each group of books as they were completed. His translation of the remainder of the New Testament followed, but its date of publication is not known.

Surprisingly, the first publication of Jerome’s work met with great hostility. He had made some sweeping changes in his translation compared with the Old Latin Version, although the Old Latin was an important component in his work. This criticism irritated Jerome, and he aired his frustrations in the prefaces to his various published works. People had become so used to the Old Latin that any changes in a new translation were automatically suspect. Gradually this hostility subsided as people recognized his scholarship and the high quality of his work. By the seventh century, the Vulgate had become

the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, and it remains so today. Its popularity and official recognition meant that it was copied profusely in the West; therefore we have about 8,000 manuscripts of this important version, although they have not been exhaustively catalogued. As a matter of fact, scholars have a massive amount of work remaining to be done in critical analysis, description and publishing these manuscripts.



As we saw in Chapter 1, our own Hebrew copies of the Old Testament come from the days of the Masoretes in about the ninth century A.D. However, by comparing Jerome's work with the Hebrew Masoretic text, scholars have been able to demonstrate that Jerome's base Hebrew text was almost identical to that of the Massoretes.

Importance of the Vulgate

The history of Western civilization cannot be understood apart from the influence of the Vulgate. Of course we must always look back to the original Greek when the restoration of the New Testament text is undertaken, but the complete picture does not come to light unless we look at the Vulgate and other versions as they played their part in the saga.

Latin Vulgate 13th Century

For a thousand years, the Bible of Western Europe was the Vulgate. In the East the Greek text was used, along with translations into the Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian,

Ethiopic, and many other languages. In the West, wherever the Roman legions had gone, Latin was destined to become the universal language of literature, commerce, and diplomacy. After the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century, the Vulgate followed the Roman troops from Italy, to Africa, Spain, Gaul, Germany, and even as far away as Britain. Throughout the Middle Ages, roughly from A.D. 500 to 1500, almost all literary activity was in Latin, whether from monasteries or schools, commercial centers or diplomatic circles. Although translations were made into other languages, the Vulgate held sway, and continued to be the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

We remember that the Old Latin preceded the Vulgate, but we must also remember that the advent of the Vulgate did not mean the demise of the Old Latin. It continued to be used for many years, particularly by the people of the Western part of the Empire. There was an intermingling of the translation and retranslation of the Old Latin with the Vulgate as is shown in many of the Vulgate manuscripts. Complete copies of the entire Bible were rare because of the size of the entire work. Consequently many early manuscripts contain a group of books such as the Gospels, or the Epistles, or the Pentateuch or Prophets, rather than the entire Old Testament or New Testament.

In the Western Empire there was constant copying of the Vulgate throughout the Middle Ages. As copies multiplied, so did the variant readings. Therefore, the same procedures for evaluating the variants in the Vulgate, and all other versions, as are used in evaluating the variants in Greek texts.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, when the Old Latin and Vulgate existed side by side, copyists would substitute readings in one manuscript for similar or synonymous readings in another manuscript, and at times they would conflate readings. The same pitfalls experienced by those who copied the Greek manuscripts also befell those who copied the Latin. As stated above, by the seventh century, the acceptance of the Vulgate was just about universal.

Conclusion

Since Christianity went into so many nations, the need to have the Scripture in many languages became apparent. We have discussed only the Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic, Old Latin, and the Vulgate. In addition there were the Gothic Version made in the fourth century, the Armenian Version, of which there are about 2,000 copies, the Georgian Version coming from the fourth century, the Ethiopic Version perhaps as early as the fourth century, but generally dated in the fifth or sixth centuries, the Old Slavonic Version, the Arabic Version, and many more. Each of these must be studied, analyzed, and compared with other versions and manuscripts. Together, they give an enormous witness to the integrity of the text of the New Testament.

Chapter 8

The Printed Greek New Testament

Introduction

As copies of the New Testament multiplied so did the variant readings. Ultimately tens of thousands of these variants occurred. The overwhelming majority are completely inconsequential, not affecting the meaning of the text in any way. Most are orthographic (as discussed in Chapter 2), many consist of a “movable ν (n)” (the adding of the Greek letter “ n ” at the end of some words), spelling variations, dropped words, substitutions, use of synonyms, transposition of words, and the like. The result is that no two manuscripts read exactly alike.

Three important factors greatly influenced the transmission of the text of the Greek New Testament. The first was the invention printing with movable type, the second was the Turkish invasion of Constantinople in 1453, and the third was the Reformation.

The invention of printing with movable type, developed by Johannes Gutenberg, completely changed the transmission of the Bible text. His first production was a beautiful edition of the Latin Bible, produced between 1450 and 1455 in Mayence (Mainz), Germany. Over the next fifty years, at least one hundred editions of the Latin Vulgate were printed and published by various European printing houses. By 1488, the Hebrew Old Testament was published, and by 1500 the entire Bible appeared in many vernacular languages of Western Europe, including Bohemian (Czech), French, German, and Italian.

About sixty years after the invention of printing, the first edition of the Greek New Testament appeared. No longer were variants treated the same way as in the hand copied manuscripts, but rather as typographical errors that could be corrected in the next printing. Of course, prior to Gutenberg’s invention, all duplication of books was done by hand, a time consuming, laborious, and expensive process. In addition, a lengthy document was always subject to all types of variations despite the skill of the copyist.

The second important factor was the Turkish invasion of Constantinople in 1453, and the fall of the Eastern Empire. This drove many scholars of the Eastern Church (Greek) to the West, bringing with them their extensive knowledge of Biblical languages. They freely taught Greek to the Western scholars, who had just about lost contact with the original language of the New Testament. The revival of learning, which was taking place about this time, was aided by this influx of these Greek scholars.

The third factor was the Protestant Reformation. Three leading figures in the rise of Protestantism came to the forefront about this time. They were Luther (1483-1546), Calvin (1509-1564), and Zwingli (1484-1531), all of whom worked on the European Continent. Their work, along with the growing public interest in the Bible and the general revival of learning and scholarship, accelerated the translation and distribution of the Bible. Aca-

demic interest in the Greek manuscripts and the development of a scientific approach to textual criticism were evident both in England and on the Continent. The end of the Dark Ages brought a flurry of activity in compiling and publishing the Greek New Testament.

Cardinal Ximenes

Outside of the Eastern Church, Greek was not well known, even within scholarly circles. It was the Eastern Church (Greek Orthodox) which preserved and copied the Greek manuscripts, while the Western Church (Roman Catholic) preserved and copied the Latin Vulgate. The honor of creating the first printed polyglot, which included the Greek text of the New Testament, belongs to the Spanish, though they were not able to actually publish and distribute it right away. The work on this polyglot Bible was done at the University in the city of Alcala, Spain, known in the Latin as the city of Complutum. It was done by a group of scholars under the direction of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (1436-1517) who is generally known simply as Cardinal Ximenes. The work is known as the Complutensian Polyglot. This was a beautifully produced edition of the Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin texts, earning the title the “Polyglot Bible.” Of the 600 copies printed, only about 123 have survived.

The work was produced in sections, with the last, the Old Testament, bearing the date of 10 July, 1517, a little more than three months prior to Luther’s posting his 95 Theses on the church door at Wittenberg. Exactly what Greek manuscripts provided the Greek text of Ximenes’ work is not known. Ximenes wrote a letter to Pope Leo X expressing his gratitude for the “very ancient codices, both of the Old and the New Testament, which aided us very much in this undertaking.” Each page of the four-volume Old Testament comprises three parallel columns of text. Hebrew was on the outside with Hebrew roots in the margin, the Latin Vulgate was down the middle, and the Greek Septuagint with an interlinear Latin translation was placed along the inside column. Scholars contend that this page arrangement was intended to carry a message. “James Lyell, a scholar of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, translates the original Latin preface: ‘[A]s our Lord was crucified between two thieves, so the Latin Church stands between the Synagogue and the Greek Church.’” The Vulgate was thought of as symbolic of the Roman Catholic Church while the Hebrew text was considered to be symbolic of the Jews and the Synagogue, and the Greek text symbolic of the Greek Orthodox Church. (See the article on line at www.dukemagazine.duke.edu, “Gallery – Converging Visions - Selections from the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library,” *Duke Magazine*, May-June 2003, Duke University, Durham, NC.)

Erasmus

Although the Complutensian Polyglot was the first Greek text to be printed, it was not the first published and distributed. When word came to Rotterdam that Cardinal Ximenes was about to publish his Polyglot, the distinguished Dutch scholar, Desiderius Erasmus hurried to complete his own edition of the Greek New Testament.

It is not known just when Erasmus began his work, but as early as 1514, while on a visit to Basel, Switzerland he discussed such a project with Johann Froben, a Swiss publisher. These talks seem to have stalled for a short time, and within a year Erasmus had moved to the University of Cambridge. Froben sent a representative to Cambridge to encourage Erasmus to undertake the project. Erasmus returned to Basel to see Froben, and in 1516 he received an exclusive imperial right for publication of the New Testament. As a result, Cardinal Ximenes was obligated to postpone the publication and distribution of any part of his Complutensian Polyglot until 1522 when Erasmus' exclusive right expired.

Erasmus had hoped that while he was in Basel he would find manuscripts of the New Testament which could be used for his work. To his disappointment, however, he discovered that the only available manuscripts required work before they could be submitted to the printer, thus placing him under severe time constraints. He had to rely heavily on two rather inferior manuscripts from a monastic library in Basel, both coming from about the twelfth century.

Scholars have long noted that because of his haste and limited access to Greek manuscripts, Erasmus produced an inferior edition riddled with hundreds of typographical errors. A revised version of Jerome's Latin Vulgate was also included in Erasmus' first publication. Reception of the first edition was somewhat mixed, though it found many purchasers. The hostility was not because of the typographical errors however, but because he had dared replace the revered Vulgate with a Latin translation of his own. Within three years he published a second edition, correcting the typographical errors present in the first edition. This edition became the Greek basis for Luther's German translation of the New Testament.

In his second edition, Erasmus made a group of brief notations in his Latin translation, offering explanations why certain words were translated as they were. Along with these philological notes were a few caustic comments about the corrupt lives of many of the priests. As a result of these comments J.A. Froude says that the "universities, Cambridge and Oxford among them, forbade students to read Erasmus' writings or booksellers to sell them." (Quoted by Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 146)

Prior to the preparation and publishing of his fourth edition (1527), Erasmus saw Ximenes' Complutensian Polyglot, and recognized that it had a generally superior Greek text to his own, and in his fourth edition he availed himself of it. In his fifth edition (1527), Erasmus eliminated the Latin Vulgate, but his Greek text underwent almost no change at all. Ultimately his Greek text was well accepted, in spite of the fact that it was based on what we would consider inferior manuscripts. After Erasmus' death, a number of unauthorized editions were printed, a few of which were considered excellent, containing alterations and corrections of his text, but most were essentially simple reprints of his work.

Robert Estienne, Stephanus

Robert Estienne, a well known scholar-printer in Paris, published several editions of the Greek New Testament, based primarily on the later editions of Erasmus combined with

the Complutensian Polyglot. Estienne's Latinized name became Stephanus, and it is by this name that he is universally known among New Testament scholars. His first edition came in 1546. The third edition, published in 1550, was noteworthy because it was the first Greek New Testament to contain a critical apparatus. A critical apparatus makes notations of variant readings at every point where the text being used as a base varies from other manuscripts being used as part of the edition.

Stephanus used fifteen manuscripts in his 1550 edition, most of which were of rather late date. This edition became for many people, especially in Great Britain, the received text of the Greek New Testament. Later that same year, Stephanus was forced to leave Paris because of his Protestant leanings, and he moved to Geneva where he issued another edition in 1551. This edition was the first New Testament to be divided into verses. Chapter divisions had been made in the early thirteenth century by Stephen Langton (1156-1228), Archbishop of Canterbury. Stephanus continued his work in Geneva, publishing a number of editions there. The edition of 1550 however remained his most widely accepted work.

Theodore Beza

Theodore Beza (1519-1605), a French classical scholar and theologian, built on the work of Stephanus. In 1548, he converted to Protestantism, and moved to Geneva where he became a close friend and successor of John Calvin, one of the great leaders of the Reformation. Beza built on the 1550 edition of Stephanus, and published nine of his own editions of the New Testament between 1565 and 1604. However, five of the nine were smaller reprints of previous editions. Each of these contained the Greek text, the Latin Vulgate text, and Beza's own Latin translation, arranged in side-by-side columns.

Although Beza was the owner of two important manuscripts, the Codex Bezae (D) containing the Gospels, and the Codex Claromontanus (D^p) containing the Pauline Epistles, he made relatively little use of these in preparing and publishing his Greek text. This, no doubt is because of the general character and peculiarities of these manuscripts. Beza's Greek text is of little critical value because it showed only slight variation from the 1551 text of Stephanus. It is of great historical interest though because of its influence on the Greek text used in the translation of the Geneva Bible (1560), and the King James Version (1611), both of which will be discussed in a later chapter. Beza's text became the generally accepted Greek text of the New Testament. The fact is that his text varied only slightly from the fourth edition of Stephanus published in 1551, the one in which Stephanus had made verse divisions.

The Elzevir Brothers

Abraham and Bonaventure Elzevir, two enterprising young printers in Leiden, The Netherlands, printed a number of smaller editions of the Greek text, based primarily on Beza's 1565 edition. Their second edition, published in 1633 has a statement in the introduction which tells the readers, "You have the text, now received by all, in which we give nothing altered or corrupted." From this statement came the expression and concept of the

“Received Text” or “*Textus Receptus*” or the “TR.” Thus this edition of the Elzevir text became the received text on the Continent just as that of Stephanus became the received text in Britain. These two editions have only minor differences from one another.

It is important to remember that during this time period the Protestant Reformation, led by Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, was moving rapidly and gaining strength, both on the Continent and in the British Isles. The preliminary reformatory work of John Wycliffe (1320-1384) in England, John Huss (1369-1415) in Bohemia, Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) in Florence, and others stimulated a great interest in the Bible, since each of these men strongly advocated the general distribution of the Bible to the public rather than just to the clergy. As a result, people were becoming more and more demanding in their desire for the Scriptures. John Wycliffe was translating portions of the Bible into English in 1356, Patrick Hamilton was preaching Lutheranism in Scotland in the 1520's, William Tyndale was at work on his English translation in 1524, and John Knox was taking the Protestant message to Scotland in 1546. These and other important factors contributed to the public's interest in the Bible.

Walton's Polyglot

The works of Ximenes (Complutensian Polyglot), Erasmus, Stephanus, the Elzevir brothers, and others had the effect of crystallizing the Greek text of the New Testament. After Stephanus, almost every edition of the Greek New Testament built on his work and that of Erasmus. Little was seen that would change anything in the *Textus Receptus*, and scholars were content to publish variants from other manuscripts in the margin without touching the “Received Text.” Even when the other manuscripts were older and better than the T.R., only a few scholars were willing to challenge that time honored text.

The seventeenth century began the era of collecting variant readings from the Greek manuscripts, the versions, and the patristics. For two centuries, scholars searched libraries all over Europe and the Middle East hoping to discover ancient manuscripts of the Bible. In 1657, Brian Walton (1600-1661), later to become Bishop of Chester, published a six volume work referred to as Walton's Polyglot. The first four volumes contained the Old Testament, the fifth volume contained the New Testament, and the sixth volume contained collations of sixteen manuscripts which had been prepared under the direction of Archbishop Usher.

In addition, Volume VI contained collations collected by Stephanus and others. A collation is a letter for letter comparison of a manuscript with a base text, noting all of the variants of that manuscript from the base text. Walton's New Testament contained the text in Greek, two Latin translations, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, and (for the Gospels only) Persian. The Greek text was that of Stephanus' 1550 edition with only slight alteration. At the bottom of the page were variant readings from the Codex Alexandrinus which had only recently been gifted by Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of Constantinople to Charles I in 1627. Walton's primary contribution to the study of the text was not so much his collection of various translations, but his sixth volume containing the collations mentioned above.

John Mill

In 1707 one of the most important editions of the Greek New Testament was published by John Mill (1645-1710). Although the base text he used was that of Stephanus' 1550 edition, his great contribution was that he cited various readings from almost 100 Greek manuscripts together with a number of versions and the patristics. Altogether Mill cited about thirty thousand variant readings, which constituted the largest collection of variants ever noted by a textual critic. Besides this, he was the first scholar to see the value and importance of the ancient versions and patristics in the study of the New Testament text.

A further contribution made by Mill was his valuable Prolegomena (Introduction) to his work in which he dealt with the canon of the New Testament and the transmission of its text, described almost one hundred manuscripts, and discussed the value of many important patristic citations. Furthermore, Mill dared to evaluate certain readings among the variants, often differing with the conventional wisdom of scholars of his day. In his discussion of the patristics, he cited more than three thousand verses of the New Testament.

As might be expected, Mill's work met with opposition. Daniel Whitby, rector of St. Edmunds in Salisbury, England was among his most vociferous critics, accusing Mill of tampering with the authority of the Bible text. Of course the Deists of that day used Mill's work as an argument against the authority and integrity of Scripture. These criticisms came from a lack of information concerning the nature of New Testament variant readings, and the concept of the authority of Scripture. Others welcomed Mill's work, and appreciated the evidence which he had brought to light through honest critical endeavors. Indeed, Mill did much to advance the work of textual criticism. He died just two weeks after the publication of his monumental work.

Richard Bentley

Richard Bentley (1662-1742) was a famous English classics scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge University. During his career, he developed principles of textual criticism for the classics which, when applied to certain classical works, demonstrated some spurious works and identified emendations to their texts. He was widely published in classical literary criticism.

Early in his career he became interested in the Greek New Testament, but it was not until he was 58 years old (1720) that he published his *Proposal for Printing*, a six page prospectus anticipating printing a new edition of the Greek text. In this *Proposal*, he gave a specimen of his anticipated work. The *Proposal* included a textual analysis and collation of the last chapter of Revelation in both Greek and Latin. In his analysis of this text, he departed from the *Textus Receptus* in more than forty places. Bentley believed that by using the principles of textual criticism developed for analyzing and evaluating the manuscripts of classical literature, he would be able to restore accurately the New Testament

text of the fourth century, or possibly even the early third century (and the days of Origen).

As one of the greatest classical scholars of his day, Bentley was a man of unimpeachable credentials, and he was determined to use his skills in analyzing the Greek New Testament. Since only a very few manuscripts of classical literature existed, the evidence for analyzing them was very manageable. However, when he began work on the New Testament, the massive amount of evidence available was more than one man could handle, and this prevented the completion of his project. One great contribution he made to textual criticism was the stimulation he passed on to succeeding scholars to complete the task which he had begun.

Johann A. Bengel

Johann Bengel (1687-1752) ushered in still another phase in the history of textual criticism. As a theology student at Tübingen, Germany he held a very strict view of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. The thirty thousand variants published by Mill was very disturbing to him, and he decided to thoroughly study the history of the transmission of the New Testament and its manuscripts. This led him to procure all of the manuscripts, early translations, and editions of the Greek New Testament which could become available to him. After his extended study, he concluded that the number of variants was actually less than one might expect, given the massive amount of material, and he concluded that these did not constitute any threat to the inspiration or authority of Scripture.

In 1725, he published an essay which was to become the forerunner of an edition of the New Testament he planned to publish. In this essay, he laid down sound principles for classifying the various manuscripts according to their similar characteristics. He divided them into two great types which he labeled the “Asiatic” which, strangely enough, he believed originated in Alexandria, and the “African” which he believed originated in Constantinople. These two divisions of the manuscripts he called “nations.” He further divided these “nations” into tribes, families, and companies. Thus, Bengel became the first scholar to classify and divide manuscripts into various types or family groups. The Asiatic group included manuscripts of a more recent date, while the African included the more ancient manuscripts. The African “nation” was further divided into two “tribes” or subgroups represented by the Old Latin and the Codex Alexandrinus.

Bengel formulated a canon of criticism which has stood the test of time among textual critics. This canon states that where variant readings are being evaluated, the more difficult reading is to be preferred. The logic of this is that a copyist would have been more likely to simplify a difficult reading (and copy the simple reading into his manuscript, thus creating a variant), than to complicate a simple reading (and copy a complicated reading into his manuscript, thereby creating a variant). Therefore, when a textual scholar comes across a variant while comparing two or more manuscripts, he should first try to apply this principle to decide which of the readings is most probable. This principle, of course, is by no means the only way of testing the most likely reading, and at times could be misused and reduced to an absurdity. He developed other principles of textual criti-

cism, generally referred to as the canons of criticism, and published these in his edition of 1734. The canons of criticism will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

Bengel's 1734 edition of the Greek New Testament did not vary much from the traditional *Textus Receptus* of Stephanus' edition of 1550. However, in the margins, Bengel indicated his own views of the relative importance of various readings. He did this by using Greek letters to indicate the degree of probability of any given reading. The letter **a** (*a*) indicated a high degree of probability for the variant reading, **b** (*b*) indicated a better reading than that in the printed text, **g** (*g*) indicated a reading just as good as the text of Stephanus, **d** (*d*) indicated a reading of lower quality than that of the Stephanus text, and **e** (*e*) indicated a very inferior reading compared to Stephanus.

As was the case with many other textual scholars, Bengel was highly criticized by the religious clerical establishment because of his disagreement with the Received Text. They accused him of being an enemy of the Holy Scriptures although he was a man of great personal piety, benevolence, and dedication to the truth of Scripture.

Johann Jakob Wettstein

J.J. Wettstein (1693-1754) was a native of Basel and a Protestant minister. At the age of 20, when he was ordained to the Protestant ministry, his ordination sermon centered on the variant readings in the New Testament. In certain circles of Protestantism, anyone who placed much emphasis of variant readings was viewed with skepticism. Within seven years, he was defrocked and driven into exile. In 1733, he became professor of philosophy and Hebrew at the Armenian College at Amsterdam, where he resumed his studies of the Bible manuscripts and their texts.

In 1751-52, he published an edition of the New Testament using the Elzevir text, almost without alteration, but he included a massive number of manuscripts and variants on each page. It has been said that there were so many citations of this kind on the page that there was barely room for the text itself. One of his most valuable contributions to New Testament textual criticism was his sound judgment with reference to the value of manuscripts. He stated that, "manuscripts must be evaluated by their weight, not by their number." Later textual critics saw the importance of this principle, and it became one of the foundation stones of textual theory and methodology.

Conclusion

There are many variant readings found in the Greek New Testament manuscripts, but the fact that there are thousands of extant manuscripts means that scholars have almost endless material to compare, study, and analyze. In thinking of the abundance of these materials, it should be remembered that we have over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of portions of the Greek New Testament going back to the second century, and complete manuscripts dating back to the fourth century. In addition there are many copies of translations, versions and quotations from the early Fathers to substantiate the message of the New Testament.

Today's scholars build on the work of their forebears. The science of textual criticism has been an evolutionary process with each generation building on and adding to the work of previous generations. There have been, and will always be, weaknesses in the process, but the methodology is constantly being tested and modified as new materials come to light and new insights gained.

Students of the Biblical text should remember that the number of manuscripts and the amount of attention and critical analysis that has gone into the exploration of the New Testament text far exceeds that of any other book of antiquity. The integrity of the message of the New Testament found in the manuscripts we possess is by far the best attested of any writing of antiquity.

Chapter 9

The Printed Greek New Testament

The Modern Critical Period

Introduction

Scholars build on the work of their predecessors. This is true in every academic or scientific discipline, and textual criticism is by no means an exception to this principle. The work of textual critics discussed in the previous chapter constituted what Metzger and others have called the “precritical period” which is followed by the “modern critical period.” There are no hard and fast dates for these periods, but it is generally agreed that about the time of Wettstein (1693-1754), textual criticism became a more systematic scientific pursuit than it was during the early days of Ximenes, Erasmus, and the Elzevir brothers. However, thanks to the work of these early pioneers, their successors had excellent guidelines to assist in developing a more scientific approach to the problems of textual criticism. In this chapter we will look at a few of the accomplishments and work of some scholars of the modern critical period from Griesbach forward.

Johann Jakob Griesbach

The work and influence of Johann J. Griesbach (1745-1812) laid the foundation for much of the subsequent work on the Greek text of the New Testament. Griesbach traveled extensively in England, Holland, and France in search of manuscripts he could collate. He gave special attention to the quotations of the early Greek fathers and several versions of the New Testament which, until that time, had received little notice.

His investigation led him to study carefully the transmission of the New Testament text, and he classified the texts into six categories. Later he reduced this to three, referring to them as the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine. Later F.J.A. Hort (see Chapter 10) used the work done by Griesbach as a basis for his own classification of text types.

The various canons of criticism were still in a developmental stage, and Griesbach made a significant contribution to this development. He set forth the premise that the shorter reading is to be preferred, provided it did not grossly violate other conditions. This was based on the general tendency of scribes to add words or phrases instead of omitting them. It has been shown that scribes tended to “explain” what they perceived to be a difficulty by adding to the text in some cases, but they would almost never intentionally leave something out. Sometimes these things were written in the margin, and later incorporated into the text itself by a later scribe. This, as all other canons, must be applied with great skill and restraint, because there are times when the scribe would certainly have accidentally (or in some case intentionally) left out a word or phrase. Even so, these seldom had any affect on the meaning of the message itself.

Griesbach's contribution to textual criticism can hardly be overestimated. He published a number of editions of the New Testament, made collations of manuscripts, and led the way for scholarly investigation of the patristics and versions.

Christian Friedrich Matthaei

Shortly after Griesbach published his first edition, a group of other scholars published collations and greatly increased the bulk of evidence available for additional editions of the New Testament. Among these scholars was C.F. Matthaei (1744-1811). While at Riga, Latvia as a professor of classical literature, he issued a twelve part edition of the Greek New Testament and the Latin Vulgate, over a period of 6 years from 1782-88. He also served as a professor at Wittenberg and Moscow. His edition of the New Testament was of little critical value, but his apparatus cited many manuscripts heretofore not used. One of his unique contributions was that he collated thirty-four manuscripts of the homilies of John Chrysostom (354-407), one of the Greek Church fathers. His contribution was not that of a knowledgeable textual critic, but that of an accurate and meticulous collector of information in the form of collations and citations of manuscripts.

Charles Lachmann

Until the nineteenth century, scholars who published editions of the New Testament basically reproduced the *Textus Receptus*, with some variations which they determined to be significant, but they also made significant contributions to the work of textual criticism. Some of these contributions consisted of collecting additional manuscripts, making collations, developing critical apparatus, systematizing various procedures for evaluating manuscripts, and formulating canons of criticism.

As we have seen in our study, a few scholars, such as Bentley, departed from the Received Text in quite a number of places, but the very first to fundamentally leave the *Textus Receptus* was a Berlin scholar named Charles (Karl) Lachmann (1793-1851). His first edition can rightly be called the first truly critical text. As a classical scholar of wide reputation, he showed how it was possible to draw inferences concerning the character of an archetype from the comparison of manuscripts probably linked to that archetype in some way. His 1831 edition followed these principles, using the mass of material gathered by Mill, Wettstein and others. Lachmann's work gave emphasis to the "ancestry" of a manuscript, although in practice he did not completely follow this principle.

His was a composite approach, using only the early uncials (no cursives), the Old Latin, and Jerome's Vulgate. Interestingly, he also used the Church fathers who lived fairly close to the time when the early uncials were copied. It should be noted that he did his work prior to the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus, and the Codex Vaticanus was not generally available to scholars during his lifetime. His methods were (and are) considered excessively rigid and mechanical, and this created two significant weaknesses. First, though he gathered and cited many manuscripts, his text itself was basically constructed from a relatively small group of manuscripts, and second, he did not give proper consid-

eration to the weight of each particular manuscript, contrasted with just the sheer number of manuscripts attesting to a particular variant.

As previously mentioned, in 1720 Bentley had questioned the TR, and departed from it in quite a number of places. As Bentley was severely criticized for his departures from the revered *Textus Receptus*, so also was Lachmann, being called by one of his critics, “Bentley’s ape.” F.H.A. Scrivener complained that, “Lachmann’s text seldom rests on more than four Greek codices, very often on three, (and) not infrequently on two.” (See F.H.A. Scrivener, *a Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 4th edition, p. 233.) Lachmann himself gladly affirmed that he was carrying out the principles laid down by Bentley in 1716 and 1720. In his second edition, he replied in kind to his critics. In spite of these weaknesses, it is now agreed by all scholars that Lachmann’s work was an unquestioned improvement over the *Textus Receptus*.

It should be noted that Lachmann did not intend for his work to reproduce the original text of the New Testament, but that his text properly represented that of the fourth century. He also emphasized the weight, not the number of manuscripts attesting to a certain reading, a principle which tended to alienate him from many scholars of his day, most notable of whom was F.H.A. Scrivener. Most scholars agree that with Lachmann’s work a new period of textual criticism began.

Constantin von Tischendorf

Without doubt, Tischendorf (1815-1874) stands head and shoulders above any other textual scholar of his day. He sought out and published more manuscripts than any of his predecessors, and produced more critical editions than any single scholar before him. As a nineteen year old youth, he studied theology and Greek in Leipzig. His teacher, Johann G.B. Winer inspired his students to pursue the study of the ancient manuscripts, and Tischendorf took this as a personal challenge. As mentioned in Chapter 3, at the age of twenty-five he began the laborious task of deciphering the palimpsest, the Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus.

Two of the greatest accomplishments of his life were the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus, also discussed in Chapter 3, and the publication of his two volume eighth edition of the Greek New Testament. His critical apparatus accompanying this edition was by far the most extensive ever constructed, containing all of the variant readings which he and his predecessors had discovered. Tischendorf has been criticized for placing too much weight on the Codex Sinaiticus, which he discovered at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. (See Chapter 3.)

Samuel P. Tregelles

Contemporary with Tischendorf was the English textual critic, Samuel P. Tregelles (1813-1875). He was, no doubt, the most influential Englishman to draw away the British allegiance to the *Textus Receptus*. While earning his livelihood as an ironworker, he devoted his spare time to learning Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Welsh, and while in his

early twenties he began to formulate plans for an edition of the Greek New Testament. Although he was not aware of it, the principles upon which Tregelles based much of his work paralleled those of Lachmann to a remarkable degree, departing from the TR just as Lachmann did. Throughout his later life he spent time collating manuscripts and examining them. He was one of the few scholars allowed to examine the Codex Vaticanus, although with very strong restrictions, and in the presence of a group of guards. He was given only six hours for the examination, and was not allowed to make any notes or to observe any one passage for an excessively long time.

Unlike Tischendorf, Tregelles was not known for the abundance of his publications. While Tischendorf hurried to publish another edition as soon as new evidence was available, or a new manuscript discovered, Tregelles was content to issue only one edition of the New Testament. This was published during his mature years, more or less as the final goal of his research efforts. This edition was published in six parts between 1857 and 1872, but, taken together, they were considered a single work. He wrote and published other volumes however, including a study of the principles of textual criticism and a survey of earlier editions of the New Testament issued by various scholars.

Westcott and Hort

The names of B.F. Westcott (1825-1901) and F.J.A. Hort (1828-1892) have become synonymous with the development of modern methodology in textual criticism. Although their methodology has undergone some revision through the years, the basic principles which they pioneered have proved to be sound, and are still considered the definitive work in this area. After working for about twenty-eight years on their first edition, they issued two volumes entitled *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. The first volume contained the Greek text itself, and the second volume contained an introduction to their work and their discussion of the critical principles employed.

Most of the earlier scholars and editors had made much of collations, while Westcott and Hort were not concerned with these matters, not even providing a critical apparatus in their publication. They relied on, and further developed the methodologies of Griesbach and Lachmann, utilizing the collection of variants provided from past editors. The text of the Codex Vaticanus became the primary source for the text of Westcott and Hort, in much the same way that the Codex Sinaiticus had become the primary source for Tischendorf's eighth edition. The text of Westcott and Hort played the dominant role in fixing the Greek basis for almost every translation of the New Testament since the English Revised Version of 1881. New discoveries and refinements in methodology, particularly in classification of text types, have caused scholars to modify some of Westcott and Hort's applications, but have not brought basic change either in the text itself, or the methodology. Their work, of course, resulted in the adoption of a text which differed from the *Textus Receptus*, bringing a considerable amount of criticism from the devotees of the TR.

In the chapter on Methodology we will engage in a fuller discussion of the work of Westcott and Hort and the methodology they developed and espoused.

John W. Burgon

Not the least of vocal critics of the work of Westcott and Hort was John W. Burgon (1813-1888), Dean of Chichester, and a respected high churchman in the Church of England. His views concerning the doctrine of inspiration of the Scriptures played a dominant role in leading him to reject the text of Westcott and Hort in favor of the TR. He held that the Scriptures were verbally dictated by the Holy Spirit, and were therefore the very words of God himself. As such, Burgon contended that the New Testament text had not been corrupted through the ages as various opponents of the TR had claimed. He was particularly critical of the work of Westcott and Hort, and the text that they published. It was therefore inconceivable to him that God would not have providentially guarded the text, even down to the individual words themselves. A basic flaw in his position was that he confused the inspiration of the message of the Bible with the idea of the inspiration of each word in the text.

Burgon also failed to see the significance of the weight and genealogical importance of manuscripts, taking the sheer number of witnesses in preference to the strength and value of each witness. He strongly opposed discarding the TR, considering it closest to the autographs. He contended that Hort's text was supported by only a few manuscripts while the TR was supported by a large number of manuscripts. Although his opposition to the Westcott and Hort text seemed to be theologically driven, in this particular argument he attempted to use a methodological line of reasoning to support his theological position.

Burgon found two allies in his opposition to Westcott and Hort, although they differed from him in both temperament and content. They were F.H.A. Scrivener and George Salmon. Both of these men were far more temperate in their opposition than Burgon was in his. While Burgon's objections were deeply theologically based, those of Scrivener and Salmon were more methodologically based.

Other Scholars and Editions

The monumental work, and the text developed by Westcott and Hort have stood the test of time, and, with few exceptions, practically all subsequent scholars have followed their lead. Among the better known scholars who have contributed in a variety of ways are Alexander Souter (1873-1949), Hermann von Soden, (1852-1914), and Eberhard Nestle (1851-1913). Each of these, and many others who came after them, has made significant contributions to the pool of knowledge of the texts and the manuscripts. The International Greek New Testament Project now headquartered at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at the Claremont University Graduate School, Claremont, California is currently one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken in the work of textual criticism. Plans for the Project were first laid out in 1948 by a combined committee of British and American Scholars. The project was first headquartered at the University of Chicago under the direction of Ernest Cadman Colwell, but it was later moved to Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia where Merrill M. Parvis directed the work. In the late 1960's it was moved to its present location at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity. Its goal is to collate every manuscript of every book of the Greek New Testament.

Chapter 10

Methodology

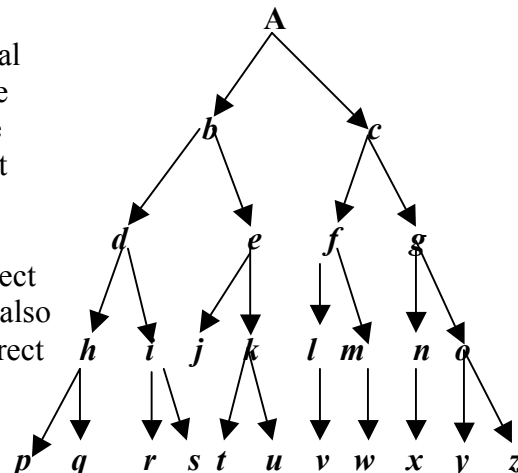
The Work of Westcott and Hort

Introduction

The original manuscripts of the Bible, referred to as the autographs, have long since disappeared. Fortunately they were copied very early and we have copies and fragments of the New Testament books reaching back to the early second century. From the first part of the second century translations of the Bible were made into a wide variety of languages, and copies of these versions have also come down to us. The early church writers (the patristics) alluded to and quoted from the New Testament books. We have copies of their writings. The New Testament is the only book of antiquity with such strong evidence for the integrity of its text.

The basic problem for the New Testament textual critic is to assemble this mass of material and recover the text of the autographs. This material consists of the Greek manuscripts, the versions, the lectionaries manuscripts, and the patristics. There are well over five thousand Greek manuscripts alone, plus many copies of the versions and patristics. By comparing the variant readings, noting the age of the manuscripts and other characteristics, scholars work toward recovering the original text. Even with all the thousands of variant readings there is not a single doctrine of the New Testament which is in any way threatened or in doubt. Sir Frederic Kenyon expresses it in this way. “Constant references to mistakes and divergences of readings, such as the plan of this book necessitates, might give rise to the doubt whether the substance, as well as the language, of the Bible is not open to question. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain. Especially is this the case with the New Testament.” In a footnote Kenyon quotes from F.J.A. Hort saying, “The amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation . . . can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text.” (See Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 55.) Kenyon gives the accompanying short diagram to illustrate the process of copying and recopying, and the way manuscripts tend to group themselves.

In this diagram **A** represents the original author’s composition. Both **b** and **c** are copies made from **A**. **d**, **e**, **f**, and **g** are copies made from **b** and **c** and so on. It is obvious that some errors in copying will be made by both **b** and **c**, but they will not be identical errors. **d** will correct some of the errors made by **b**, but will also make some of his own. **e** will also correct some of the errors of **b**, but will also make some of his own. This then becomes the process of history.



As copies multiply, so do both the corrections and the errors. Notice that the copies of **b** and **c** form separate lines of descent. This phenomenon is referred to as the genealogy of a manuscript. When a small group of manuscripts can be shown to have many variants and other characteristics in common, they are called a family. Where similar characteristics are found in a very large group of manuscripts this becomes known as a text type.

Unfortunately we do not have all of the copies of any family or text type since many of those intermediate copies have perished. Now, suppose that we have only **p**, **l**, and **y**. It is obvious that each of these will have divergent readings. It is the work of the textual critic to compare these manuscripts (**p**, **l**, and **y**) to see what mistakes they have in common, and which are peculiar to each. Wherever they differ, the scholar applies the principles of textual criticism to determine which is most likely to be the original reading, and in this way to reestablish the original text of **A**.

This of course is an over simplification but it does illustrate the basic problems faced by the textual scholar. The process is complicated by a number of uncontrollable factors such as the lapse of time between the date of original authorship and the present, the variety of types of manuscripts, the history of the church, theological concerns which have affected some of the texts, and other such matters. The approach of Westcott and Hort has become the standard methodology for textual criticism, and will be discussed in some detail in this chapter. Hort emphasized that the principles to be followed in textual criticism of the New Testament are no different than those to be followed in the evaluation of any written document.

Canons of Criticism

Throughout the history of textual criticism various scholars have seen the need to develop and invoke certain rules to follow when evaluating manuscripts and readings. These are generally referred to as the canons of criticism. The word “canon” means a measure or rule, and these canons form the criteria for choosing between variant readings. Some of these were discussed in Chapter 2, and you are referred to that chapter for additional information. When evaluating a reading, the more positive the results from applying the various canons of criticism, the more probable a reading becomes. However, all canons do not carry the same degree of probability. Some are a bit mechanical, but must be applied with skill, while others are more subjective, and their effectiveness draws heavily on the skill and training of the critic. Listed below are the more important canons used by textual critics. Some of these are in the form of questions while others are statements.

1. Which reading is supported by the greatest number of manuscripts? This is one of the simplest canons, but it can be very misleading, and should not be considered decisive.
2. Which reading is supported by the oldest manuscripts? This also must be used with caution, because it can be shown that some very ancient manuscripts are of inferior quality.
3. Which reading is supported by the “best” manuscripts? This will involve a prior evaluation of the manuscript itself, along with the text type or family.

4. Which reading is supported by manuscripts from the widest geographical distribution? This would indicate that that particular text was not localized.
5. Which reading is supported by a family of manuscripts or a text type of known excellent characteristics?
6. Which reading is supported by the known characteristics, style, and theology of the original author? This deals with Intrinsic Probability.
7. Which reading best fits the immediate context? This also deals with Intrinsic Probability.
8. The shorter reading is ordinarily to be preferred. Scribal characteristics usually show that scribes were more likely to add to a text than to shorten it. Therefore a shorter reading is probably more nearly original.
9. The more difficult or obscure reading is probably to be preferred. Scribes are known to add explanatory words in order to clarify a difficult reading rather than to create an obscure reading from one which is clear.
10. The reading which best explains the origin of another reading is to be preferred.
11. A demonstrable scribal error is to be rejected. If it can be shown that a non-word is used, or an obvious error on the part of the scribe is seen, it is to be discarded in favor of another reading.
12. A reading which bears the ear-marks of a doctrinal controversy is to be ruled out in favor of one which has no such suspicion attached to it.

Obviously all of these cannot be applied in every case where a variant reading occurs. In fact, if this were attempted, it would result in contradiction. No canon of criticism can be considered absolute, but must be applied with skill and good judgment, and in consideration of other criteria skillfully applied to a reading.

Internal Evidence of Readings

Hort's analysis began with the Internal Evidence of Readings. He considered that evidence to be the first step, and most rudimentary form of analysis, dealing with each variant individually. Analysis of the Internal Evidence of readings begins by asking which of the two, or more, variants appears to be the most probable. Probability has two separate but related aspects. These are Intrinsic Probability, which deals with the author, and Transcriptional Probability which deals with the copyist. A critic must evaluate Intrinsic Probability first, and then proceed to evaluate Transcriptional Probability.

Intrinsic Probability deals with what the author was most likely to have written at the point of the variant. It asks the questions, "Which of the readings makes the best sense?" and "Which of these readings would the author most likely have written?" This evaluation takes into consideration grammatical matters, the immediate context, and congruence with the style of the author, and such kindred matters. This evaluation obviously has a strong subjective character. Intrinsic Probability is a reasonable presumption concerning the best reading, but it does not become the basis for a final decision.

It is important to note that Intrinsic Probability must be used with caution. Investigation of various types of literature has shown that authors do not always use the words, the

grammatical constructions, or the style which readers might expect. In addition, especially with Biblical themes, a reader's theological and moral presuppositions may play an important role in a decision between variants. Presupposing that a reader understands exactly what the author intended to write can therefore be very misleading.

Transcriptional Probability, the next step in the process, deals with the question of what the copyist would probably have written in his copy. Since this is a little less subjective, it may form a little stronger basis for a decision. Known causes of variations in the text have already been mentioned in Chapter 2, and should be reviewed at this time. Hort mentioned what he called "observed proclivities of average copyists," referring to the fact that many of the characteristic tendencies of copyists have come to be known through scholarly study, and these should be taken into account. Of course the critic's experience and training play a very significant role when evaluating transcriptional probability, because the natural tendencies of copyists might be difficult to judge. Attempting to determine what the scribe probably would have written can create a real danger for the critic. When a scholar uses Transcriptional Probability he must be keenly aware of the canons of criticism, and employ them both selectively and effectively.

When a scribe came to a word or phrase which he considered to be a poor reading in his archetype, he may have tried to improve it, thus unconsciously creating a corruption in the text. In practice, the habits of scribes have been so closely studied from the manuscripts that Transcriptional Probability is usually considered reasonably strong.

Neither Intrinsic Probability nor Transcriptional Probability can be considered in isolation. Usually they both move in the same direction, thus complementing each other. When they conflict, the general rule is to lean toward Transcriptional Probability since it tends to be more objective, but, as we will see, there are other important factors to be considered as well.

Internal Evidence of Documents

Instead of evaluating each reading in a manuscript solely on its own merits, the textual critic must also evaluate the document itself. As one evaluates readings by using the Internal Evidence of Readings he gains assurance of his evaluation by considering whether or not the document itself is generally trustworthy. Manuscripts have individual characteristics, and those characteristics must be considered before a final judgment is made.

When evaluating the quality of a manuscript the most obvious factor to consider is the document's date. Relative date provides a valuable presumption of relative freedom from corruption when considered on a large scale. In other words, the closer a manuscript is to the time of the original author, the more likely it is to be freer from corruption than a manuscript of later date. Once again, this opinion must be used in conjunction with other criteria because it is possible that a relatively late manuscript may contain a very ancient text, while an early manuscript may contain a relatively corrupt text.

Another manuscript characteristic which must be considered relates to scribal habits. As the document is read, one must look for signs of the copyist's accuracy and evaluate whether the manuscript shows that the copyist was negligent or careless in his work. The care taken by the copyist can be observed by noting such things as obvious spelling errors and dropped words which render a sentence meaningless. Evaluating this characteristic requires continuous study of the document as a whole, or at least large sections of it. It must be remembered, however, that a careless scribe may have been copying from an archetype which had an excellent text type.

If a manuscript constantly supports readings which have strong Internal Evidence of Readings, and finds support for those readings from other documents whose readings clearly commend themselves as original, it is natural to prefer the readings in that document over others in manuscripts of less integrity. Hort expressed it by saying that "knowledge of documents should precede final judgment upon readings." (See Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 176.) Furthermore, when a document is found consistently to have excellent readings and another is found to habitually have poorer readings, there can be little doubt that the text of the first has been transmitted with comparative purity, while the second has probably suffered corruption. Making such an evaluation of a manuscript will give the textual critic greater confidence when looking at the great mass of readings in a given manuscript.

The process of employing Internal Evidence of Documents actually consists of three steps. First, by using Internal Evidence of Readings, data is gathered and a tentative evaluation is made concerning those readings. The results are not final, but only point in a general direction. Second, based on the total evidence gathered from the Internal Evidence of Readings, the document as a whole is evaluated. In this step one determines which document(s) tend to have the best readings overall. Steps one and two ought not to be confused. Step two looks at the document as a whole, while step one looks primarily at the individual readings themselves as part of the ultimate process of evaluating the document. Third, the readings are again evaluated, but this time in light of the relative value of the document as well as the principles of Internal Evidence of Readings. Where the Internal Evidence of Readings (Intrinsic Probability and Transcriptional Probability) coincide with the relative value of the document, a very high degree of probability is reached. If these differ, the critic must begin the process over, and reevaluate his first assessments.

Genealogical and Internal Evidence of Groups

The first step in overcoming the subjectivity of Internal Evidence of Readings is to evaluate readings, not independently, but in light of the whole document. Next, the critic must look at the document, not as independent of others, but in reference to its relationship to other documents.

At this point, go back and look at the diagram at the beginning of this chapter, and notice that the documents in that illustration fall into two different groups. Those copied from "b" and its "descendants" have formed one line of descent while those copied from "c"

have created a different line. As the diagram illustrates, manuscripts are not just many individuals, each existing on its own, but they have a genealogical relationship to each other. Knowledge of these relationships is gained primarily by studying the texts in the various manuscripts. One important principle to keep in mind is that identity of readings implies identity of origin. A mixture of readings of course further complicates the process.

Text Types

Manuscripts demonstrate relationships to each other, as the diagram at the beginning of this chapter illustrates. The work of Westcott and Hort, in applying the principles discussed above, demonstrated the idea of text types and families. On the basis of their investigation they determined that the text of the New Testament is represented in four types of texts. They are the Syrian, the Western, the Alexandrian, and the Neutral. Most critics before Westcott and Hort had been content to use the manuscripts they had, comparing them to the TR, and choosing what seemed to be the best reading. However, the identification of text types did not begin with Westcott and Hort. As mentioned in Chapter 8, J. A. Bengel in 1725 classified New Testament manuscripts into two categories, the Asiatic and the African, and J.J. Griesbach (1745-1812) built on this by classifying manuscripts into three text types. Other scholars built on this through the years, but it was Westcott and Hort who clearly shaped the principles utilized in the classification of text types.

The expression “text types” is used to identify a group of manuscripts which, because of their characteristics, show a strong relationship to each other. The two most important characteristics are the commonality of readings and basic genealogy. For example, if you have ten manuscripts under investigation, five of which read together at a certain point, but the other five read with each other against the first five at that point, it would seem that you have an impasse – five against five – on the basis of sheer numbers of manuscripts. However, if it can be shown that the first five were all copied from one common “ancestor,” while no such situation is present with the other five, your first five have really reduced their “weight” to just one, namely the parent of the whole group. In such a case you now have five against one rather than five against five. The critic must go far beyond this before coming to a final conclusion, but this scenario demonstrates the importance of manuscript relationships and the genealogical method.

With the genealogy and comparative weight of manuscripts in mind, Westcott and Hort asked, “Is it possible to arrange the manuscripts of the New Testament in a way which will show how some manuscripts have common characteristics with others, particularly in their readings?” In and of itself, the classifying of a group of manuscripts based on their relationship to each other does not say anything about superiority or inferiority. It simply demonstrates a relationship among them.

The Syrian Text Type

In a discussion of text types, the patristic evidence plays an important role. By examining the writings of particular Church fathers, and the consistency of their use of a particular text, it is possible to determine the type of text which was in use at a particular time, and in a particular area. Close study of the manuscripts of the Church fathers can lead to information concerning the time and place of origin of certain text types or characteristics. Hort demonstrated that this was particularly evident in the Syrian text. He showed that this text was used by John Chrysostom, Bishop of Antioch (Syria) at the end of the fourth century, and that other writers around Antioch were also using the same type of text at about the same time. This text type turns out to be that which is contained in our late uncials and cursives, finally to be incorporated into the TR. The evidence from Church fathers led Hort to conclude that the Syrian text type probably originated in Antioch of Syria perhaps by the end of the third century or beginning of the fourth century. In contrast to this, in the writings of some of the other Church fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, and Tertullian, we find no peculiarly Syrian readings, but there are readings characteristic of other text types. Additional historical facts have come to light from other sources, which indicate that the Syrian text was taken to Constantinople and disseminated widely throughout the Byzantine Empire.

One peculiarity of the Syrian text is the presence of conflate readings. From Chapter 2 you will remember that a conflate reading is one in which a scribe has combined the wording from two or more manuscripts into his own copy. The example given in Chapter 2 cites Luke 24:53 where one group of manuscripts says the apostles were returning to Jerusalem, staying in the temple and “praising God,” while another group of manuscripts speaks of them “blessing God.” A third, and very large group, combines these readings, speaking of the apostles “blessing and praising God.” Conflation is one of the prominent characteristics of the Syrian type of text. The Syrian is also referred to as the Byzantine text type. The presence of conflate readings indicates that, at the time a manuscript was copied, there were at least two other readings. Therefore, Hort concluded that the Syrian text was created as a revision of the texts which existed in Antioch around the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century.

The result of accepting this conclusion concerning the Syrian text is important. If a group of manuscripts having the Syrian type of text differs from manuscripts containing another type of text, and it can be demonstrated that the non-Syrian manuscripts have an earlier origin, the Syrian text is to be rejected in favor of a more ancient text. This premise was (and is) difficult for some to accept, simply because there are more copies of the Syrian text type than any other. Once again however we must reiterate the principle that the sheer number of manuscripts attesting to a reading can never be the final court of appeals in deciding between readings. Some of the manuscripts containing the Syrian text in the Gospels are Codex A (the Codex Alexandrinus), Codex C (the Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus), the late uncials, the later versions, and the great mass of cursives, with the exception of Codex 33.

The Western Text Type

The Western text, as Hort termed it, was both ancient and widespread. It has been a problem text throughout the history of textual criticism, and these problems have been debated among authorities but without solution. The Western Text has its greatest significance in the book of Acts.

It is a text type which abounds in additions, assimilations, and paraphrases. One of the major problems with this text is its love for paraphrase, sometimes omitting an entire sentence in favor of a paraphrase of the text. Its origin and history are unknown, and this fact has baffled scholars for generations.

Another problem faced by textual scholars in dealing with this text is the fact that it dates back to the second century, making it one of the most ancient texts we have. We know this because it is used in part by some of the very early Church fathers such as Clement of Rome, Origen (while he was still in Alexandria), Cyprian, Irenaeus, and others. Traces of it can be seen also in the writings of Justin and Marcion in the first half of the second century. The Curetonian Syriac and the Old Latin versions have Western type readings. Whole verses or even longer passages are found in manuscripts in this family which are entirely absent from all other manuscripts. The main witnesses to the Western text are D (the Codex Bezae, in the Gospels), D^p (Codex Claromontanus in the Epistles), a few cursives, the Old Latin version, and the Curetonian Syriac.

The Neutral and Alexandrian Text Types

Although Hort called this text type “Neutral,” this nomenclature begs the question, and is a misnomer. Nothing in textual criticism can really be considered “neutral.” After evaluating the various text types, tracing their genealogies, and generally applying all of the criteria discussed above, Hort came to the conclusion that the text type which came closest to being free of corruption was that contained in manuscripts B (the Codex Vaticanus), and **a** (Aleph, the Codex Sinaiticus), both of which come from the early to mid-fourth century. Because he felt these to be basically uncorrupted, he labeled this text type as “Neutral.” Without doubt, these two manuscripts are not far from the original text. Hort expressed his confidence in these two manuscripts in both a positive and negative way. Metzger records Hort’s words: “It is our belief (1) that the readings of **a** B should be accepted as the true readings until strong internal evidence is found to the contrary, and (2) that no reading of **a** B can safely be rejected absolutely, though it is sometimes right to place them only on an alternative footing, especially where they receive no support from versions or fathers.” (See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 179, quoting F.J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, p. 225.)

Hort classified a few manuscripts as having the Alexandrian text type. This text type has, for many years, been included in Hort’s Neutral text. Originally he considered the Alexandrian text to be a sort of purist category of the Neutral, but that position has been abandoned by scholars for many years. The designation was based primarily on the better

syntax found in some manuscripts, and on their higher degree of philological correctness. Hort's Neutral is now referred to as the Alexandrian text, and as a result, Hort's classification of the text types now comes to three rather than four. They are the Syrian, the Western, and the Alexandrian.

Evaluating the Work of Westcott and Hort

The somewhat revolutionary methods and practices of Westcott and Hort understandably met with opposition from the average Christians of their day, for their work resulted in the rejection of the Received Text as truly representative of the original New Testament authors. The TR was based entirely on the Syrian text, but Hort's work was based on the "Neutral" (Alexandrian) text which was found primarily in **a** and B. The primary argument favoring the TR was that it had a massive number of manuscripts supporting it. Of course Hort's response to this was first, those manuscripts were all of very late date, and second, the Syrian text type on which the TR was based, was of late origin, and appeared to be a purposeful revision of a more ancient text, namely that of **a** and B. As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, during the closing decades of the nineteenth century John W. Burgon wrote vociferously in opposition to the text of Westcott and Hort. His opposition has been discussed in Chapter 9. The overwhelming acceptance by the scholarly world of the work of Westcott and Hort is clearly seen in the fact that almost all translations of the New Testament from the time of the English Revised Version of 1881 until the present have used Hort's text as their Greek basis.

The English reader can see a rough comparison of the TR (Syrian text type) with the Westcott and Hort text (Neutral – Alexandrian text type) by comparing the King James Version (translated in 1611 from the Syrian text type) with the American Standard Version (translated in 1901). The simple conclusion is that, although there are word differences, the message of the New Testament is not changed in any way.

Chapter 11

Early Editions of the English Bible

Introduction

The exact time when Christianity came to the British Isles is shrouded in mystery. Some scholars believe it may have been introduced as early as the second century, while others say it was the early fourth century at the latest. Supporting an early date is the appearance of three British bishops at the Council of Arles in A.D. 314, but the progress of Christianity was relatively slow except in Ireland where it took root very early. It was not until the sixth century that the Gospel began to spread effectively in Britain. In A.D. 597 Augustine, later referred to as Augustine of Canterbury, landed in Kent and gave Christianity the boost it needed to spread over each of the British Isles. Southern England was an especially fertile field. Notice that this is not the famous Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (in Algeria).

Of course the early Christian missionaries brought the Latin Vulgate with them, and the variety of languages spoken in various parts of the Isles became barriers to any sort of universal translation. In addition, few people could read, so preaching the gospel was the main tool for evangelism.

Early Translations and Paraphrases

During the middle of the seventh century an ignorant, uneducated farmer in Northumbria named Caedmon was working for an official of the Abbey of Lady Hilda at Whitby in Britain. It was a custom at the abbey that each one attending a festive gathering in the great hall would play the harp and sing one by one. Caedmon could not sing, and he would leave each time just before it came his turn to sing. A myth grew up about a vision which Caedmon supposedly had, in which he saw someone telling him to sing. After a few objections he submitted, and when his turn came to play the harp and sing, he did so, paraphrasing into poetry various portions of the Scripture.

Although Caedmon's work cannot be considered a translation of Scripture, his paraphrases were later written down, and by 670 they appeared in published form. To the best of our knowledge this was the first attempt at putting a part of the Bible into some form of the English language.

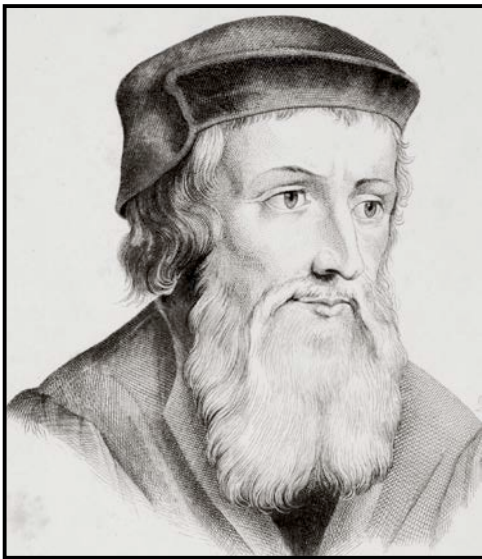
The Venerable Bede

The work of Caedmon and others was written down by the Venerable Bede (674-735) in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*. Bede wrote commentaries on various books of the Bible, many of which were intended for scholars, but others of which were addressed to the common man. At the time of his death he was engaged in translating the Gospel of John. He died almost immediately after dictating the final chapter to his

amanuensis (scribe). Unfortunately that translation has not been preserved. The same fate befell the work of King Alford (848-901). Historians know that he was instrumental in producing translations of various parts of the Old Testament and affixing a translation of the Ten Commandments and other laws from the Old Testament to his own code, but none of his actual work has survived. By 1300, a number of translations of various parts of both the Old Testament and the New Testament appeared, but they were all very scarce, and had limited circulation. Most were created for local use.

John Wycliffe

In the fourteenth century there arose one of the most illustrious figures in the history of the English Bible. The work of John Wycliffe (1330-1384) cannot be understood apart from the political and religious events of his general time period. During the tenth century, the culture and scholarship of the English clergy had dropped to such a point that they were not able to understand the Latin language, and the Gospels were translated into



John Wycliffe 1330-1384

the Anglo-Saxon tongue. By the fourteenth century, the time of John Wycliffe, that language had dropped out of use, but no new translation had been made to take the place of the old Gospels translation. The books of the Bible were practically unknown to the common man except for a few paraphrases of some of the books. With the beginning of a revival of learning, and a greater amount of writing in the English language, such ignorance of Scripture could not last very long. This was the age of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), and his *Canterbury Tales* which demonstrate a revival of religious and literary interests by the common man.

Wycliffe received his doctorate in theology from Balliol College, Oxford University in

1372, and he became known as a brilliant theologian. He taught briefly at Oxford, but within a year or two he moved and began writing pamphlets challenging certain religious practices and engaging in various ecclesiastical controversies of his day. Although both the British government and the British people considered themselves loyal Roman Catholics, England had always regarded itself as somewhat independent from the political, religious, and monetary domination of the Pope.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries constituted a period of transition. It was neither the Middle Ages, nor the time of the Reformation. Quarrels with the Roman Catholic hierarchy were heated, especially in England. The Hundred Years War had taken an enormous toll on the economies and the people of both Britain and France, and international marriages, mixed with international hostilities, had changed the nature of the Eng-

lish and French royal titles. All of this resulted in great political, economic, and religious confusion. Adding to this confusion was the decision of the Roman Pope to levy heavy financial burdens on the Britons in order to raise money for his depleted ecclesiastical treasury in Rome. Parliament refused to go along with the demands of the Pope, in part because of the lavish lifestyles and immense wealth of many of the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church. These factors contributed greatly to Wycliffe's attitude toward both the Pope and the Roman Church, and many of his pamphlets were vigorous attacks against their demands. In almost all of these controversies, Wycliffe had the support of the royal government, Oxford University, and the masses of the people. However, as would be expected, his enemies were the bishops of the Roman Church.

Wycliffe's championship of the common people led him to become a strong advocate for translating and distributing the Bible in the vernacular language. In order to minister to those who could not read, he formed his own order of "poor priests" to go to the people and preach to them in their own language, working in harmony with the clergy when this was allowed, but independent of them when necessary. These "poor priests" were not ordained clergymen, but volunteers. Those who became followers of Wycliffe's ministry became known as the Lollards. They grew rapidly, and were soon found all over England.

All through Wycliffe's life his opposition to the Catholic Church became broader. At first, he simply opposed the Catholic Church's levying of excessive taxes on the Britons, but his opposition expanded to many other controversial doctrinal matters. He opposed transubstantiation, papal authority, and the withholding of the Scriptures from the laity.

In about 1382, Wycliffe's translation of the New Testament appeared. It is not certain how much of this translation was his own work and how much should be attributed to a colleague. The Old Testament was completed just prior to his death in 1384. His entire translation was made from the Latin Vulgate rather than from the Hebrew and Greek texts, making this a translation of a translation.

Nicholas of Hereford, identified simply as "Hereford," was one of Wycliffe's colleagues who translated a considerable portion of the Old Testament. He was a systematic and precise man, and these characteristics led to a very stiff literal translation, whereas Wycliffe's own work was smoother and more colloquial in style. After Wycliffe's death his first translation went through some revision and was republished. This revision soon enjoyed wide circulation, and took the place of Wycliffe's original publication.

It should be remembered that all of this took place prior to the invention of printing, making it necessary for every copy to be hand produced. When we speak of "wide circulation" the slow pace of reproduction needs to be kept in mind. Copies were few and costly. In 1906, Ira Price commented on the price the people of Wycliffe's day had to pay for a single copy of his translation. "Early in the fifteenth century a complete copy would have brought, in our money, about one hundred and fifty dollars." (See Ira M. Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1907), p. 225.) By today's standards, this would be an enormous amount of money.

Wycliffe's Bible was proscribed by the archbishop of Arundel in 1408, adding that all of his publications were forbidden to be read throughout the Canterbury area. Added later was the injunction that all who read the Scriptures in the mother tongue (English) should 'forfeit land, catel [cattle], lif [life], and goods from their heyres [heirs] for ever.' In 1408 a stronger injunction was issued by a convocation at Oxford threatening excommunication of anyone reading Wycliffe's publications or his translation. In 1412 an additional law was enacted against the Lollards apparently crushing the movement. The prohibitions did very little to curb the appetite of the people however. Presently there are about one hundred seventy manuscript copies of Wycliffe's Bible known to exist, but less than thirty of these contain his original translation.

Henry VIII, the Inquisition, and Bible Translations

Two important historical events cannot be separated from the history of the English Bible. They are the reign of Henry VIII and the Spanish Inquisition. Henry was ruling England at a crucial time in history (king 1509-1547), and one of his wives, Catherine of Aragon was the daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain.

The Roman Inquisition was actually begun back in 1231 by Pope Gregory IX. At that time the office of the Inquisitor was entrusted almost entirely to the Franciscans and Dominicans because of their superior theological training. In 1252, Innocent IV officially sanctioned the use of torture to extract truth from those suspected of certain heresies. The Inquisition was originally directed against the Albigenses, and to a lesser degree against the Waldenses. When these heresies came under control, the intensity of the Inquisition diminished.

In 1478 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain requested papal approval for the Spanish Inquisition to organize a movement against the Marranos, Jews who had insincerely converted to Catholicism through coercion or social pressure. In 1502 this turned into a movement against insincere converts from Islam, and in 1520 it turned against those suspected of Protestantism. In 1542, because of the rapid spread of the Protestant Reformation and the renewed interest in the Inquisition in Spain, Pope Paul III established the "Congregation of the Inquisition." These events helped establish the religious/political environment during the reign of Henry, and should be kept in mind as the history of the English Bible is reviewed.

William Tyndale

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, three important events took place in the middle of the fifteenth century which, though unconnected, had a profound affect on the English Bible. They were the invasion of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, the invention of the printing press in 1454, and the Protestant Reformation. The importance of the printing press is obvious, but the Turkish invasion of Constantinople is also very important. That event caused a westward migration of Greek scholars from the hostile environment of Constantinople to the friendlier environment of Europe, particularly the British Isles. The Protestant Reformation played a major role in creating this environment. These scholars

brought knowledge of the original Biblical languages with them, and the western scholars were eager to learn from these newcomers to their lands. The publication of the printed Greek New Testament was first begun in 1515 by Erasmus and the Elzevir brothers. About this time William Tyndale (1490-1536) appeared on the scene. The invention of printing drastically reduced publication costs, and inspired the average person to see the possibility of having the Bible in his own hands. The general character of the Reformation certainly played a vital role in bringing the Bible to the average person, but it was William Tyndale and his predecessors who first blazed that trail.



William Tyndale 1490-1536

Although John Wycliffe, known as the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” translated the Bible into English at a very early date, his work was more localized than that of William Tyndale. Consequently, Tyndale is the one who is referred to as the “Father of the English Bible.” It was the invention of printing, and its introduction into Britain by William Caxton in 1470, that provided the wider circulation of all of Tyndale’s work, particularly his translation.

From a very early age Tyndale was known to love the study of Scripture. He attended both Oxford and Cambridge, possibly studying under Erasmus, where he engaged the clergy in debate and discussion concerning the proper work of the church. It was during these discussions that he is reported to have said to one of his adversaries among the clergy, “If God

spares my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who driveth a plough shall know more of Scripture than thou doest.”

Tyndale had hoped that his efforts to place the Bible into the hands of the common man would receive enthusiastic support from the leaders of the Catholic Church, but he found quite the opposite to be the case. Shortly after 1523, when his application for support for his translation was denied by the bishop of London, he decided “that there was no place to do it in all England,” and he felt compelled to leave his native country and go to Hamburg to do his work. Tyndale’s translation of the New Testament, unlike that of Wycliffe, was made from the original Greek. However, in making his translation he compared the Greek text with the Latin Vulgate, and the Old Latin, as well as Luther’s German translation.

One must also remember that it was during the period from 1521 to 1533 that the religious and political controversies over the various marriages of Henry VIII were taking place, resulting in the English Church breaking away from the Roman Church. These events created all sorts of theological, personal, and political confrontations in England,

even causing the deaths of many people. On the Continent the reform movements of Luther and Calvin were moving at a rapid pace creating controversies with the Catholic hierarchy in many parts of continental Europe.

While in Hamburg in 1525, Tyndale completed his translation of the New Testament, and then moved to Cologne in order to have it printed. He was known to belong to a reformist party, which placed him in great peril. The printing was to be done in secret, but the project soon became known by enemies of the Reformation. When the printers were heard to boast of their work, a plan was laid out to discover where the printing was being done. The printers were invited to the home of a man named Cochlaeus who got them drunk and found out where three thousand copies of Tyndale's translation were being produced. Tyndale however managed to secure those portions which had already been printed, and fled with them to Worms where the work was completed.

By 1526 printed copies of his translation were arriving in England, and were being rapidly bought up by the public. Catholic Church leaders on every level denounced the translation and Sir Thomas More wrote against it with great bitterness, but the public continued to purchase copies. In an effort to exhaust the supply, the Catholic bishops subscribed the necessary funds to buy up all remaining copies and publicly burned them in London. Tyndale himself was quite pleased with this action, because the proceeds from the sale of the entire lot could finance the work of refining his translation and republishing it. In addition he saw a public relations benefit literally created by the actions of the Catholic hierarchy. His words were, "The whole world will cry out against the burning of God's Word; and the overplus of the money that shall remain to me shall make me more studious to correct the said New Testament, and so newly to imprint the same once again." (See the footnote in Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 286.) So intense was the search for copies, that all of them were ultimately sought out and destroyed. Today only a single fragment of eight leaves exists, and it is now on display in the British Library.

Having published his translation of the New Testament, Tyndale began work on the Old Testament, and in 1530 he issued the Pentateuch, which had been translated from the original Hebrew. As years passed, he continued to work on the Old Testament, publishing various parts, but it was never completed. During this time he continued to work on the New Testament. Printers in Antwerp had issued a number of unauthorized editions of his New Testament, and Tyndale strongly objected to this fraud and piracy. He concluded that his best remedy was to make his own revision and republish it. This he did, releasing it in 1534. This edition is considered the climax of his work on the New Testament. It contained introductory material for each of the New Testament books, marginal comments, and extracts from the Old Testament at the conclusions of some of the books.

The court of Henry VIII and his queen Ann Boleyn was becoming more friendly to the idea of an "authoritative" translation of the Bible into English, and Tyndale presented an elaborate copy of his translation to the queen who had long favored the translation of the Bible into English. On the other hand, the severe hostility of the Romanist party continued to increase against Tyndale for distributing the Bible to the public in the language of

the people. While Tyndale was still residing in Antwerp, a free city, a traitor named Henry Philips gained his confidence, and in 1535 betrayed him to the officials of Charles V (1500-1558), emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. They kidnapped him and took him out of the city, removing him to Vilvorde, Belgium. After a long imprisonment he was brought to trial, and in October, 1536 was strangled and burned at the stake. At the time of his execution, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

Miles Coverdale

History shows that Tyndale's dying wish was already being fulfilled, for in 1534 the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury petitioned King Henry VIII to authorize a trans-



Miles Coverdale

lation of the Bible into English. The repudiation of papal authority in England was leading to the multiplication and publication of many copies of the Bible in the English language. Miles Coverdale (1487-1569), who had been a friend of Tyndale while he was living on the Continent, published a translation of the Bible in 1535. He dedicated it to Henry VIII, and in the second edition in 1537 there appeared a statement in the Preface: "Set forth with the King's most gracious license."

Henry's attitude toward English translations had evidently undergone fundamental change, because ten years earlier Coverdale had wanted to translate and publish an English Bible, but

failed to obtain Henry's authorization. It seems that the volatile religious and political climate at that time had played a significant role in Henry's refusal. Coverdale published at least two revised editions of the New Testament.

Coverdale was neither a Greek scholar nor a Hebrew scholar, nor did he claim to be. His version was translated from the Latin Vulgate, Luther's German translation, and Tyndale's English translation. Much of what Coverdale did was paraphrase, but a considerable portion of his phraseology ultimately found its way into the King James Version of 1611. He freely admitted his lack of scholarship in Greek and Hebrew, and made no claim to originality. However his work is significant in two ways. First, through his connections with Thomas Cromwell he was able to obtain the favor of the monarch, and dedicate his volume to Henry VIII. Second, his was the first complete Bible to be distributed to the English people in their own language. Tyndale's translation was not complete.

Matthew's Bible

New revisions of the various translations mentioned above appeared in rapid succession. One of the first of these was known as Matthew's Bible, published in 1537, and was the work of John Rogers, an associate of Tyndale. It is not known just why Rogers referred to his work as "Matthew's Bible," but on the dedication is the name "Thomas Matthew." Rogers' version was actually a republication of Tyndale's work, published in 1526, and Coverdale's work, published in 1537, the same year that Matthew's Bible was published. Some scholars believe that if Tyndale's name had appeared in the publication it would have made it impossible for Henry VIII to admit it into England without a sort of self-incrimination, since he had previously vigorously proscribed Tyndale's New Testament. It is not definite whether or not this was a factor. This Bible was a combination of Tyndale's and Coverdale's work on the Old Testament, and Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. The importance of Matthew's Bible is the fact that it constituted the real completion of Tyndale's work.

The Great Bible

With the work of John Rogers, and the acceptance of the Matthew's Bible by the monarch, Henry VIII, the English Bible had gained a sort of official recognition. Still it was not read in churches. The Vulgate held that honor, as had been the case from the time of Jerome in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Thomas Cromwell, Vicar General to



The Great Bible

Henry VIII, decided to have Miles Coverdale print a lavish edition in Paris with the cooperation of the King of France. French paper and French printing were more elaborate than any to be found in England, and with the French king's license, printing began in 1538. Soon however, friction between the two countries brought the project to a halt, and the Inquisition instituted by Pope Paul III in 1542 seized some of the sheets that had been printed. Coverdale managed to retrieve many of the sheets, and shipped them to London along with printers, type, materials, etc., and the work was completed there in late 1538. This version was largely based on an earlier translation made by "Thomas Matthew" (John Rogers) in 1537, about the same time as Coverdale's second edition. Cromwell ordered that a copy be put in a convenient place in all churches. Many editions of the Great Bible and other translations began to be published, and the Bible was

enjoying rather wide circulation in the British Isles. In 1540 Cromwell was accused of treason, arrested, and executed without trial by order of Henry VIII, and the Bible was reissued with a new authorization from Bishop Tunstall of London, a former enemy of the movement. The Great Bible received its nickname because of its size. It was very popular with churches and became the official Bible of the Anglicans.

The Great Bible, in spite of its size, was not confined to churches, but also found its way into homes for private study. A manuscript of the Great Bible, now in the British Library, contains a narrative of a young 15 year old boy who tells how various poor men would gather on Sunday at the lower end of the church and listen to the reading of the Bible. This boy's father took him away from these gatherings, but he continues the story by saying, "Then, thought I, I will learn to read English, and then will have the New Testament and read thereon myself." The Great Bible went through seven editions, and became very popular with churches and individuals alike. By this time, the presence of the English Bible was well entrenched in the life of most Englishman.

The Geneva Bible

Toward the end of the reign of Henry VIII, opposition to the Reformation once again began to rise. In 1543, Henry ordered all translations of the Bible bearing the name of Tyndale destroyed, and the common people were forbidden to read any part of the Bible either publicly or privately. By 1546 Coverdale's New Testament was included in the ban.

Henry VIII and his wife Jane Seymour had a son named Edward. Upon Henry's death in 1547, the young boy became King Edward IV. Since he was only 9 years old at the time, he reigned through a regent, the Duke of Somerset, who had strong Protestant leanings. Due to his physical frailties Edward lived only six and one half years longer. However, during his brief reign, opposition to the reform movements subsided significantly, and once again the English Bible was reprinted and freely distributed. It has been said that during Edward's six year reign no less than forty editions of the various existing translations were republished.

Upon Edward's death, the reins of power went to Mary Tudor, the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. Catherine was the daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, and she had married Henry VIII as part of a political arrangement. As her parents had been, Catherine was also very strongly Catholic. Mary, her daughter, set out to destroy her religious opposition, gaining for herself the dubious distinction "Bloody Mary." Two men who had been closely associated with the progress of translation, Thomas Cranmer and John Rogers were burned at the stake, and Miles Coverdale, who had become Bishop of Exeter under Edward IV barely escaped the same fate. The public use of the English Bible was forbidden, and copies were removed from churches.

The persecution which came with "Bloody Mary" drove many non-Catholic religious people to the Continent, including some of the Puritans, many of whom went to Geneva, Switzerland. In Geneva, they came under the influence of the Calvinistic branch of the



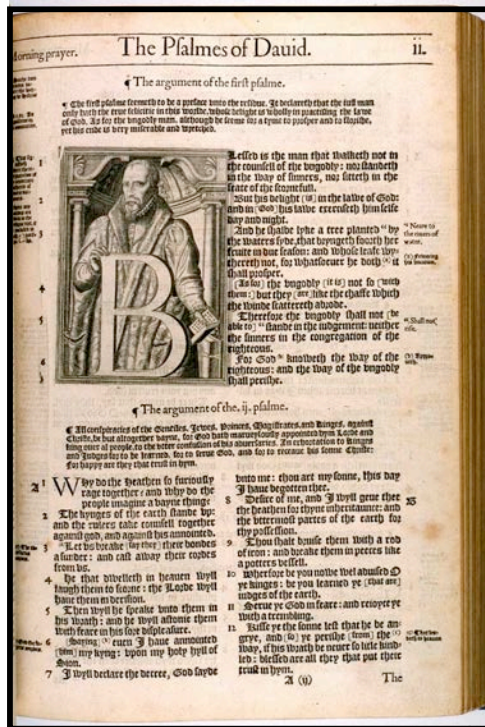
Geneva Bible

Reformation. A group of scholars in Geneva translated the Bible into English, probably with the help of Thodore Beza, the textual scholar and friend of John Calvin. The favorable religious and political environment of Geneva gave scholars an outstanding opportunity to revise and sharpen the translation of the Great Bible in the Old Testament and Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, producing one of the most cherished versions yet, commonly called the Geneva Bible. Its translators divided the Bible into chapters and verses as Stephanus had done in his 1551 edition of the Greek New Testament. Published in 1560, this became the household Bible of the Puritan exiles, and later of all Protestants in England, and remained so until the advent of the King James Version of 1611. As one would expect, given the influence of Theodore Beza and John Calvin in Geneva, the scholarship behind the Geneva Bible was excellent. Later, when the Puritans came to America, this is the Bible they brought with them.

The Bishop's Bible

The death of "Bloody Mary" in 1558 brought her half sister, Elizabeth to the British throne. Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn, and she was raised with strong Protestant convictions. Mary had been a ruthless Catholic monarch, bent on restoring Catholicism to Britain, while Elizabeth was a conciliatory Protestant, eager to establish peace between the two opposing factions, English Protestants and English Catholics. Obviously this created a favorable climate for greater religious freedom, and the publication and distribution of the English Bible. The Great Bible was restored to churches, more or less as the "official Bible," and reading of the English Bible once again became part of the worship.

The publication of the Geneva Bible and the return of many Puritans from the Continent made it impossible for the Great Bible to retain its position in the minds of the people. The Geneva Bible was superior in style and scholarship, and its language was not as stiff as the Great Bible. Observing that there were many translations of the Bible into English, Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, saw the need for the Anglican Church to



Bishops' Bible

The Rheims-Douai Bible

In the eyes of the Roman Catholic hierarchy it was neither necessary nor desirable for the average person to have a Bible of his own. The Catholic Church taught that one of its primary responsibilities was to be the official interpreter of Scripture, and its position was that the laity were neither qualified nor trained to perform this complex work. Possession of the Bible by the laity was thought to lead only to confusion, misunderstanding, and conflict. However, the zeal of the reformed churches for possession and study of Scripture in their own languages drove the Romanists into competition with them. The irrepressible popular demand for Scripture in the language of the people made it desirable for the Roman Church to produce a translation of its own.

Religious persecution in England had affected not only the Protestants but some Catholics as well. Therefore many of them had fled to the Continent. In the city of Douai, France there was an English Roman Catholic seminary, and it was here that the translation was begun. In 1578, the seminary was transferred to Rheims, and the New Testament was published in Rheims in 1582. Although the Old Testament was ready to be published, lack of funds prevented its appearance until 1609, after the seminary had moved back to Douai.

It is important to note that the Roman Catholic version was translated, not from the Greek and Hebrew, but from the Latin Vulgate, meaning that it was a translation of a translation, inheriting all of the syntactical and linguistic problems which attend such an

have an “official” translation of the Bible in English. In 1563 he appointed a group of scholars who worked separately to make translations of their assigned portions of Scripture, with the archbishop himself, a fine textual scholar, having final editorial prerogatives. The Bishops’ Bible was completed in 1569 and at once superseded the Great Bible as the official Bible of the Anglican Church. It was widely distributed to all churches and bishops in England, but most people continued to prefer the Geneva Bible.

In the forty-two years which intervened between the first publication of the Bishops’ Bible and the King James Version of 1611, the Geneva Bible went through about one hundred twenty printings while the Bishops’ Bible was reprinted only twenty times, and most of those were for churches rather than households. Clearly, the Geneva Bible had won the hearts of the people.

undertaking. This approach was taken because the Roman Church believed that the Latin Vulgate was superior to Greek manuscripts, contending that those manuscripts had been corrupted. In addition, the translators considered it necessary to follow as closely as possible the Latin even when it made the English meaningless in some places, and very confusing in many places. This rigidity caused the language to be very stiff, even though it was translated during the Elizabethan period of the English language, the period of unsurpassed beauty of English style.

Sir Frederic G. Kenyon made the following comment concerning the Rheims-Douai Version. “Regarded from the point of view of scholarship, the Rheims and Douai Bible is of no importance, marking retrogression rather than advance; but it needs mention in a history of the English Bible, because it is one of the versions of which King James' translators made use.” (See *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Article “English Versions”). Because of its inferiority compared with the King James Version, published just two years later, it did not enjoy a very wide circulation.

Conclusion

The history of the English Bible reaches back to the very dawn of Christianity in the British Isles. The English feeling of remoteness from the political and religious authority of the Roman Church created fertile soil for the growth of the seed of the Word. Although there were many conflicts in its history, the translators of the English Bible won their victory in giving the average Englishman access to the word of God. All of the translations made from the time of Wycliffe until 1611 however did not completely satisfy the needs of the people. In our next chapter we will see how these needs began to be satisfied with the advent of the King James Version.

Chapter 12

The English Bible From 1611 to the Present

Introduction

The publication of the Geneva Bible in 1560 was a landmark in the history of the English Bible. Although the Bishops' Bible of 1569 became the Anglican Church's official version, it never became the household Bible for the English people. This place of honor was reserved for the King James Version, published in 1611, which became the most popular and longest lasting translation of the Bible ever produced.

The Puritan Conflict

Henry VIII, with his conflicting marriages to Catherine of Aragon, Ann Boleyn, and Jane Seymour, stirred up great conflict with the Pope since his marriages violated Catholic Dogma. Thomas Cromwell, who became Vicar General to Henry, advised him to invoke the English *Statute of Praemunire*, a law dating back to 1353, which forbade all appeals outside of England. This meant that the Pope could not impose his authority or control over the British, or over those living under English law. Through a series of clever maneuvers Henry had the English clergy declare him "the sole protector and supreme head of the English church and clergy insofar as the law of Christ allows." This resulted in the English clergy giving Henry permission to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled, so he could marry Ann Boleyn. Despite this, the Catholic Church in England maintained a surprising outward conformity to Rome, with most of the population still considering themselves loyal Catholics.

In 1532 parliament gave the king authority to abolish certain payments to Rome, and later that same year it passed a decree that all laws enacted by the clergy were subject to the approval of the king. This reinforced his claim as head of the Church of England. The pope excommunicated Henry, theoretically relieving all Englishmen from allegiance to their monarch.

In the Act of Supremacy of 1534, the parliament proclaimed Henry and his successors to be "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England," thus completing the breach with the Roman Church. The Acts of High Treason passed soon afterward declared that anyone denying the title given to the king and his successors would be found guilty of high treason against the State.

The confiscation of the property of the Catholic Church began, and some of the wealth of monasteries was taken and used by the king, and much of it was given to his favorite people. This created a landed gentry and a new aristocracy who opposed any return to the Roman Catholic Church. As would be expected, along with these changes came considerable corruption within the Anglican Church, giving rise to a group of "reformers" referred to as Puritans.

These Puritans were in constant conflict with the Anglican clergy and other favorites of the king, and they suffered a great deal of persecution from time to time. Upon Henry's death in 1547, his son Edward occupied the throne for a brief period. Mary – "Bloody Mary" – the daughter of Henry and Catherine of Aragon, a very strong Catholic, succeeded Edward to the English throne. She was extremely zealous to bring back the Roman Church, and invoked the Catholic law that heresy was a crime against God. Kenneth Latourette says that under her "about three hundred went to the stake." (See Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 809.)

During Mary's reign the Puritans fled into exile on the Continent. Many of them went to Geneva where they became thorough-going Calvinists. Upon Mary's death her half-sister Elizabeth came to the throne, and the Puritans and other reform minded people were no longer under the threat of death. Yet these exiles were not completely comfortable with Elizabeth's settlements between Catholics and Protestants. Consequently they continued their struggle for a "purer" worship, contending that they could not, in good conscience, subscribe to the Book of Common Prayer, the guidebook for the Anglican Communion. Two other areas of contention were their insistence on greater incorporation of Calvinism in the Church of England, and their belief that church government should be changed from an episcopal form to a presbyterian form, which they believed to be more in keeping with Scripture.

The Puritans had a strong interest in Scripture, and created an academic center at the University of Cambridge. In addition, they became great land-owners, which added to their influence in the country. Rather than withdrawing from the established church, they chose to work within it, but they were considered a threat to the unity of the church. Another group severed ties with both the Anglican Church and the Puritans, and established its own entity, resulting in the Congregational Church. All of these events help us understand some of the religious and political turmoil which characterized the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward, Mary, Elizabeth I, and James I, and which set the stage for the most important translation of the Bible ever made.

Queen Elizabeth died childless, and her cousin James, son of Mary, Queen of Scots, became king of England in 1603, taking the title James I. Prior to his accession to the throne of England he had been ruling Scotland as James VI. During his early years he had displayed a keen interest in Scripture, translating some of the Psalms, and writing a paraphrase of the book of Revelation.

Elizabeth had brought an environment of political and religious tolerance to the country, and this atmosphere continued during the reign of James I. During this period, England was producing an outstanding array of writers and poets including Shakespeare, Spenser, and Bacon who exemplified the Elizabethan era of English literature.

The Hampton Court Conference

In order to deal with the differences between the Puritans and the High-Church party, James I convened a conference to meet at the Hampton Court Palace, about 15 miles

southwest of London. This took place very early in 1604. The Conference met January 14th, 16th, and 18th of that year, with James himself presiding. About twenty-one high clergymen and ecclesiastical lawyers were gathered to hear the grievances of the Puritans, who were represented by four educators and scholars from Oxford and Cambridge. The position of the Anglican Church was presented on the first day, and on the second day John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford presented the case for the Puritans. James made a rather lengthy speech at the conference dealing with the corruption in the Anglican Church, but ending with a powerful attack on the Puritans.

The value of the conference was not that it brought a solution to the Puritan complaints, for it completely failed to resolve a single important issue. Only a few minor items were changed, and those were still unsatisfactory to the Puritans. However, in Dr. Reynolds' presentation, he called attention to the need for a new translation of the Bible, though this was not originally a major item. The clerics present did not seem to be particularly interested in a new translation, but Reynolds' proposal struck a responsive note with the king. James I did not like the Geneva Bible because of some of the notes incorporated in its margin which denounced the church-state relationship. Within a month James began making preparation for a new translation to be made by the most learned men of Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster.

By July, 1604, James had appointed fifty-four of the "best learned" in each of those institutions to perform their work. The translation was to be reviewed by the bishops, and finally to be ratified by The Privy Council and by royal authority. It was not until 1607 that the work actually began. The scholars from the three universities were divided into six groups. Two were selected from each institution, with each group assigned a particular portion of Scripture.

Out of the original number of fifty-four, only forty-seven finally participated in the work. James himself, no doubt with the aid of Richard Bancroft, bishop of London, laid out the rules which were to guide the translators. Some of the more important guidelines were (1) No interpretative notes were to be included, (2) cross references were to be included, (3) the Bishops' Bible was to be used as a guide for phraseology, though other English translations were also to be consulted, (4) no phraseology was to be used which showed any sectarian bias, and (5) when each group completed its assigned portion, their work was to be sent to each of the other groups for review and revision. Any differences of opinion would be resolved by the chief members of each group meeting together. The Greek text to be used as a basis for the translation of the New Testament would be primarily that of Stephanus' 1551 edition. Comparison with former English translations later showed that the works of Tyndale and Coverdale played an important role in forming the general character of the new version. The entire process took two years and nine months of intensive work.

When the translation was published in 1611, the words "Authorized Version" appeared on the fly leaf, meaning that this version had been produced under the authorization of the King, and was likewise authorized by the King to be read in churches. Hence the translation became known as the King James Version of 1611, or the Authorized Version.

As one would expect, the translation met with opposition. Speeches were made and writings appeared opposing the new translation. This continued for about forty years, but the excellent quality of the translation, the beauty of its language, and the undoubted scholarship of its revisers won for the King James Version its rightful place in the history of the English Bible, a place which it still occupies in the minds of millions of English speaking Christians.

Other Translations

Various revisions of the King James Version appeared between 1611, the year it was first published, and 1881, when the English Revised Version was first published. These revisions corrected many of the flaws of the translation, making it more readable. In addition, a large number of other translations appeared during those intervening years. New manuscript discoveries and their publication, along with further developments in methodological skills, prompted many of these translations. Among the most important of these discoveries and publications were Tischendorf's discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus, the publication by the Roman Catholic Church of facsimiles of the Codex Vaticanus, and the arrival of the Codex Alexandrinus in Britain. Scholars such as Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, and others mentioned in chapters 9 and 10 published their editions of the Greek New Testament, and these publications almost invariably led to translations into the English language, some of which preceded the King James Version, and others which came after it.

The English Revised Version, 1881

As years go by, all languages undergo change. Syntactical changes occur, words change their meanings, some words become archaic, and idioms and language styles change. These and other factors mean that there can never be an absolutely final translation of Scripture. During the years between 1611 and 1881 the English language underwent many such changes. These language changes, discovery of additional manuscripts, and further development in methodology brought the need to consider an update of the Authorized Version. In February, 1870 a committee, appointed by the Convocation of Canterbury, voted unanimously to begin such a project, and by June of that year the work was begun.

A group of fifty-four scholars were invited to participate in the project, representing a broad cross-section of Protestant churches. Roman Catholic scholars were invited to participate, but none accepted the invitation. The fifty-four scholars were divided into two companies of twenty-seven each, one group for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament. In order to keep the language uniform the two groups frequently reviewed the work of each other and mutually discussed needed changes. In August, 1870, a body of thirty American scholars, finally reduced to twenty-four, was invited to participate in the project, with the eight principles of the British committee governing their work. Because some scholars died, and a few had to withdraw, the final number of scholars working on the project, both British and American came to about seventy-five. It was not until 1875 that certain differences could be worked out between the British and Americans, so

work did not begin immediately. One of the cardinal rules insisted on by the British was that when there were unresolved differences between the British and American scholars the British would prevail, but the American opinions would be published in an appendix. The American committee agreed not to publish their revision for a period of fourteen years.

Among the principle guidelines for the undertaking were (1) the language of the Authorized Version would be used, insofar as possible and practical, in creating the new translation, (2) each group would revise its assigned portion, and review it before presentation, (3) the texts of the original languages would be based on the best manuscript evidence available with the utilization of current methodology, (4) no changes would be approved without a two-thirds majority vote.

The New Testament was first published in May, 1881 and was enthusiastically received. In the first year, three million copies were sold in Britain and America. The Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Times newspapers published the entire text of the New Testament on May 22, 1881. The Old Testament was completed in 1884 and published in 1885, but with much less enthusiasm than had accompanied the publication of the New Testament. So it took fifteen years from the time of the conception of the revision for the finished product to be ready for publication.

The American Standard Version, 1901

Since the American Committee had agreed not to issue a version of its own for fourteen years, there was relatively little translating and publishing activity in the United States during that period of time. For the Americans, part of the problem with the English Revised Version was that certain words employed by the British were not frequently used by Americans, while some words used by the English actually carried a different meaning for the Americans. An example is the word "corn," which to the British means all kinds of grain, but to the Americans it refers to a particular grain, sometimes referred to as "Indian corn." Many such words which became controversial to the Americans were not changed by the British. These and other facts rendered the English Version somewhat awkward for American readers, and could have led to some misunderstanding the text.

About two years before the expiration of the fourteen year limit, the American Revision Committee entered an agreement with the Thomas Nelson and Sons Company for that firm to publish the American Standard Version in 1899 or thereafter. Just before the expiration of the fourteen years, the university presses of Oxford and Cambridge published an American Revised Version in which they incorporated the recommendations of the American Committee of 1881, thus preempting, to some degree, the American publication of the new revision.

This caused a storm of protest from the Americans, but it was later calmed with the publication of the American Standard Version in 1901. Ira Price paid tribute to the American Standard Version and its translators by saying, "As it now stands it is the most perfect English Bible in existence, and will be the standard version for English readers for

decades to come.” (Ira M. Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, pp. 304-305.) It must be said however that Dr. Price’s prediction has not come true, for other translations, such as the New International Version, have surpassed it in popularity, though not in scholarship.

One outstanding English textual scholar, Sir Frederic Kenyon, was not pleased with the publication of the American Standard Version. After its publication he wrote:

It is unfortunate that the action originally taken by the English revisers with a view to securing that the two English-speaking nations should continue to have a common Bible should have brought about the opposite result; and though the alterations introduced by the American revisers eminently deserve consideration on their merits, it may be doubted whether the net result is important enough to justify the existence of a separate version. (From *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Article “English Versions.”)

As stated above, some scholars anticipated that the American Standard Version would enjoy wide circulation and extensive use by clergy and laity together. This however was not the case. It was well received, but certainly not with enthusiasm. Despite its superior base texts in both Greek and Hebrew, and the superiority of its scholarship, the average American still held to the King James Version. The ASV was a very literal translation, much of the time leading to rigid syntax, and it did not have the beauty of language characteristic of the KJV.

Other Translations

Since the beginning of the twentieth century fresh translations, especially of the New Testament, have appeared periodically. Most of these were made by single scholars acting alone, and endeavoring to put the Bible, particularly the New Testament, into contemporary language. Among the first of these was the translation of R.F. Weymouth which appeared about 1902. He attempted to create a translation of freer modern English, getting away from the traditional language and expressions of the older versions.

James Moffett’s translation of the New Testament appeared in 1913 and of the Old Testament in 1924. He took considerable freedom with the text, at times to the point that some believe his work in the Old Testament is inaccurate. Those who had grown up reading the King James Version felt that Moffett’s translation didn’t “sound like the Bible.” Others felt that Moffett’s work finally made the Bible intelligible when compared to the King James Version. Edgar J. Goodspeed, of the University of Chicago published a version of the New Testament in 1923 which was republished in 1935 along with an Old Testament translation by J.M. Powis Smith. This translation made extensive use of American idioms.

The Jewish Publication Society of America published *the Holy Scripture According to the Masoretic Text* in 1917, preserving the traditional order and arrangement of the Hebrew Bible. This was revised and republished in 1937. In 1962 the Society published

The Torah: The Five Books of Moses which was a translation from the Masoretic Text, and the third edition of this work was published in 1992.

Roman Catholic Translations

One should not conclude from the above information that the Roman Catholics were sitting idly by while these translations were being made. Although it had not been the Catholic Church's historic position to place the Bible into the hands of the common man, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of outstanding Catholic textual critics rose to prominence. F.A. Spencer, a Catholic scholar, published a modern speech translation of the four Gospels in 1901, to be followed in 1912 by a translation of the remainder of the New Testament. However, this work was not published until 1937. In 1941 the Rheims-Challoner New Testament was published in America, the work of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and it was considered to be a very fine work. In 1945 Ronald A. Knox published a completely new translation of the New Testament using the Latin Vulgate as his base. This constitutes a translation of a translation. Despite the accuracy of Knox's work, scholars did not (and do not) look favorably on a translation of a translation. In 1949 Knox's Old Testament translation appeared.

The Revised Standard Version, 1946-52

The Thomas Nelson Company had the copyright on the American Standard Version, and the company's rights were to expire in 1928. In that year a committee was set up by the International Council on Religious Education to consider the possibility of producing a further revision, but it was not until 1937 that a decision was reached to begin the project. The goal was threefold. First, the translation was to embody the very best of modern scholarship; second, it was to employ language which was modern but dignified in simple classic English style as seen in the King James Version; and third, it was to be suitable for both public and private reading. The revision committee was made up of thirteen scholars from a broad spectrum of Protestant faiths in America along with Jewish representation for the Old Testament. The New Testament was published in 1946 and the Old Testament in 1952 and both met with almost immediate success both in America and England. The revision was called the Revised Standard Version.

The New Testament in Modern English, 1958

J.B. Phillips, an English New Testament scholar, made this translation and issued it first in England and then in America. Although he considered it a translation, most scholars consider it a cross between a translation and a paraphrase since he takes much more liberty with the Greek words and phrases than most translators would consider appropriate. Phillips himself states that he believes that a translation should deal primarily with the sense of Scripture rather than an attempt to reproduce its words.

The New English Bible, 1961

Before World War II the copyright on the English Revised Version was running out, and the Oxford University Press invited G.R. Driver of Oxford and J.M. Creed of Cambridge University to submit samples for a revision of the 1881 English Revised Version. Because of the war, the project was delayed. After the War the Church of Scotland took up the project and decided to make an entirely new translation rather than a revision. With this translation, there was no attempt to use the phraseology of a previous translation such as the King James or English Revised, but the translators began from scratch using contemporary language. The undertaking met opposition at first, but it was finally approved, and an impressive array of scholars was gathered to do the work. Their mission was to produce a translation using the language of the day, and to eliminate the archaic expressions of the past.

Three groups, or types of readers, were targeted. They were: (1) the youth, who needed Scripture translated into modern day English; (2) those who were so thoroughly familiar with the King James and Revised Versions that when those versions were read both readers and the listeners were “lulled to sleep,” not having to think about what was being read; and (3) those who did not read the Bible because of its archaic language.

Although it was produced by fine scholars, this version has not met with wide acceptance, partly because it is quite literal in its syntax, not giving proper consideration to the peculiarities of both the original languages and the English. It is, however, considered by scholars to be an excellent work.

The New American Standard Bible, 1960-63.

This version was first published by the Lockman Foundation in La Habra, California. The goal of the translators was to update the language of the American Standard Version of 1901, and to revise the literalness of that version by using more English/American idioms to communicate the message more perfectly.

The New World Translation, 1961

This version is a private translation which was made for the Jehovah’s Witnesses. There are serious defects in this translation, especially in John 1 concerning the divinity of Christ. Its theological bias is evident in a number of places. It is generally considered to be a very poor translation of the New Testament.

The Living Bible, 1962-67

Kenneth Taylor published the *Living Letters* and the *Living Gospels* as a paraphrase of the New Testament Epistles and Gospels. Their success encouraged him to create a paraphrase of the entire New Testament, and finally of the Old Testament also. The publication was called *The Living Bible*, and was completed in 1967. No claim was ever made

that this was a new translation, but the popular language employed and ease of understanding gave it strong popular appeal.

The Jerusalem Bible, 1966

In 1954-55 a group of French Dominican scholars translated the Bible from its original languages into French. Later the English Jerusalem Bible was translated, also from the original languages, but it shows a strong relationship to its French counterpart. In the Old Testament the Jerusalem Bible departs frequently from the Masoretic Text going along with the Greek Septuagint.

The Jerusalem Bible includes an introduction to each book, reflecting the work of modern scholarship. Also included are footnotes for interpretation of the text, as perceived by the translators. A somewhat strong influence of the Vulgate is also seen in some places, but the Jerusalem Bible is generally considered to be a good translation.

Good News for Modern Man, 1966

From the time of its inception, the American Bible Society has published and distributed Bibles and selected portions of the Bible at minimum cost to the public. In the mid 1960's the Society provided its own translation of the New Testament in modern English in order to correct what it perceived as a linguistic obstacle in current translations, particularly the King James Version. In 1966 the Society's new translation, called *Good News for Modern Man*, or *The Good News New Testament*, was widely circulated. With the advent of many modern language translations, this version's popularity diminished somewhat, but the Society continued to publish and distribute it on a broad scale. It is still widely published by the Society, and it now comes in a Catholic edition as well as in the original edition.

The New International Version, 1978

This translation was undertaken by a group of college and seminary scholars from America, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, and was sponsored by the International Bible Society. The objective was to produce a completely new translation that would accurately reflect modern day English, but would not be just a revision of older versions. In this objective it had some kinship with the New English Bible of 1961, but it has enjoyed considerably wider circulation than that translation. One important objection to this translation is that it frequently uses words and phrases which are not in the original language but reflect what the translators believed was the sense or proper interpretation of the word or phrase in the original. It is one of the most widely used versions in America today.

The New King James Version, 1980

This revision of the King James Version was an attempt to retain the beauty of the language of that version, but to update its archaic words. Although the translators took into

consideration some of the more recently discovered manuscripts, mainly the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Sinaiticus, and the Codex Alexandrinus, they relied almost entirely on the Greek manuscripts used in the original translation of the King James Version in 1611. Readings from more recently discovered manuscripts are cited in footnotes. This approach was taken primarily because of their rejection of the genealogical method of textual criticism held by almost all textual critics since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This method dates back to the time of Westcott and Hort, and resulted in the Greek text which has become the basis of almost all translations of the New Testament since the English Revised Version of 1881.

Other translations

Over the past 100 years, various New Testament scholars have produced independent translations of their own. Some of these have enjoyed wide circulation and popularity while others have left little imprint. Examples of these translations are a C.K. Williams (1952) version, *The Amplified New Testament* (1958), the Berkley Version (1959), and a translation by William Barclay (1969). There are also a number of Roman Catholic translations now available.

Each of these versions is an attempt to put the text into a more contemporary form of speech, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Generally speaking, they are good for comparative reading, but one of their primary weaknesses is that the translators, since each was working on his own, may have taken excessive liberty with the text. Where there is a group of scholars working together on a translation there is the expectation of better scholarship, and less chance of theological biases entering into the work.

Chapter 13

The Canon of the New Testament

Introduction

When and how did our New Testament come into existence as a book? What was the process? Why were the books collected? Who had the final say about just which books should be included and which excluded? These questions are frequently asked.

The collection of books in our New Testament is called the canon. This is from a Latin word which means a “measure, or standard.” Thus, the canon is made up of those books which measure up, or meet the standard. What standard was used, and who used it? In this chapter we will investigate these questions.

A Beginning Point

Regarding a point of beginning, F.F. Bruce says, “It goes without saying that, to all who acknowledge our Lord as Messiah and Son of God, His utterances could be no less authoritative than those of the prophets through whom God had spoken in Old Testament times. ‘God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son.’ (Heb. 1:1).” (See F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, Revised Edition (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1950), p. 105).

Combining this statement from Hebrews, with the fact that Jesus promised his apostles that they would receive divine guidance from the Holy Spirit (see John 14:26, 16:13), one would expect that there would be a record of the activities and teachings of his apostles. This is basically the belief of Christians. But can that position be defended? Is there reason for believing this? It is evident that the earliest Christians held to this, so this fact creates a reasonable beginning point in the investigation of the canon.

The Apostolic Period

The Church has always had a canon of Scripture. During its early days, the church’s canon was the Old Testament, which was quoted frequently by Jesus himself, and later by the writers of the books of the New Testament. The Jewish people had a profound respect for Scripture, and this attitude was immediately adopted by the earliest Christians. As Christianity spread into the Gentile world, this respect for a book was part and parcel of their faith.

The New Testament came into existence over a period of about fifty years, with various books being written in different parts of the world. Nine of its books are anonymous, but the other eighteen have author’s names attached to them in their opening statements. Ten of the books are addressed to churches, eight to individuals, and nine are not addressed to any specific churches or individuals, but are general in their destination audience. (These

general writings include three of the Gospels, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I John and Jude.)

The fervent spread of early Christianity among both Jews and Gentiles attests to the fact that there was something unique about its message and its founder. This uniqueness is wrapped up in the fact that the apostles who led the movement, and the other early Christians were ardent believers in the resurrection of Christ. Biblical scholars of all persuasions are almost unanimous in affirming that the reality of the resurrection was the motivating force behind early evangelism.

In the history of pre-Christian Judaism, there were times of intense Messianic expectation. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as other evidence, attests to this fact. Even though Christians saw many more “Messianic” passages in the Old Testament than the Jews saw, it is still evident that certain ideas of the character of the Messiah were generally accepted by the Jews. One of these was the belief that the Messiah was to be of the seed of David.

In the opening of Acts, Luke referred to his former writing (the Gospel of Luke), in which he had told Theophilus about the things Jesus had begun to do and to teach. The story of Christ in the Gospels then is two-fold – the things Jesus did and the things Jesus taught. The work of the apostles and others was to spread the good news of this two-fold message. The earliest documents of the New Testament are letters written by the apostles (Paul in particular) to their young converts, instructing the converts more completely in their new faith. Christians believe that as the apostles executed this mission, Christ’s promise that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth was being fulfilled. It is important to remember that the early Christians, even before there were any written documents, looked to the apostles as the revealers of God’s message in the gospel. When writing began, but before there was a recognized canon of scriptures, Christians in widely diverse places recognized the message of the apostles as the message of God’s revelation. It must be remembered that the authority of a document precedes and determines its canonicity. Canonicity is not determined by an acceptable vote of a council.

While the eye-witnesses of the events and teachings of Jesus were still alive, it seems that the church did not see the need for a written account of Christ’s life and teaching. It was not until the decade of the sixties of the first century that this need seems to have become imperative. Papias, as will be shown below, tells how Mark, the companion of Peter, wrote as Peter reminisced about Christ’s teaching and work, and this writing became the first Gospel to be produced. Shortly afterward Matthew produced his Gospel, probably in the East, and Luke, the companion of Paul wrote a two volume work first giving an account of the life and teaching of Christ, followed by Acts, the brief account of some of the work of a few of the apostles. Close to the end of the first century John wrote an additional Gospel, not covering the same ground as the other three, but giving us another perspective on the life of Jesus.

The writings of early Christians of the second and third centuries clearly demonstrate that certain books were recognized as carrying divine authority while others were at least

questionable, and many completely rejected. This acceptance or rejection did not come as the result of the act of a council, but by the acceptance or rejection of the Christian community. In the controversies which arose both within and outside of the church, and in their exhortations and homilies, the earliest Christians came to recognize and utilize the writings of certain selected men. Christians usually used the writings of others in a less authoritative way, many times casting doubt on their authority. This is not to say that such an attitude was universal, for the history of the canon shows that the process was gradual, sometimes controversial. By the end of the second century the canon was fairly well recognized, even though some books were still in doubt.

As stated above, the early church had, as its original canon, the Old Testament. It was considered Holy Scripture, was quoted frequently by the various New Testament writers, and Jesus himself made constant use of it. In addition, Jesus specifically said that he did not “come to abolish the law and the prophets” but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17). Paul appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures to support many of his polemical statements. Christian writers in the second century did the same.

In addition, when the apostles spoke and wrote they considered their words to carry the authority of heaven. Acts 2, Peter’s sermon on Pentecost, vividly demonstrates that the apostles considered themselves the spokespersons for God. Paul commended the Thessalonian church for receiving his words, “not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God.” (I Thess. 2:13). Paul’s letters to the church at Corinth carry unmistakable marks of his authority to deliver God’s word.

But how did the churches receive these writings? The church at Corinth had many problems, some of a practical nature, and others of a fundamental doctrinal nature. They wrote to Paul, asking about some of these things (see I Cor. 7:1), and Paul himself wrote a very authoritative letter back to them instructing them concerning those and other things. In speaking of himself and the other apostles, Paul said, “But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” I Cor. 2:9. Paul instructed the Corinthian church regarding the Lord’s Supper by prefacing his remarks with the words, “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.” I Cor. 11:23. As we read the New Testament it is obvious that the writers expected their words to be accepted by the recipients as authoritative, and it is equally obvious that they were so received.

Types of Evidence for the Canon

As previously shown, the early church translated the Bible into a variety of languages, the Latin, Coptic, and Syriac being among the earliest. The existence of these translations becomes evidence of the existence of a canon of Scripture. Books were expensive to reproduce in the ancient world, since hand copying was the only method of production. Therefore, only literature of great value was translated and circulated. The existence of a variety of translations as early as the second century testifies to the value the early church placed on certain books, and also shows that, at a much earlier date, these books had earned a reputation for their value to the Christian community. Furthermore, the widespread geographical areas in which early versions appeared gives additional credence to

the high position the canonical books held in the minds of their readers. In Chapters 6 and 7 there is information on the general locale and time of translation of some of these versions.

Evidence From Catalogues

At various times individuals and councils made lists of the books which they considered to be canonical. These lists are referred to as catalogues. They come rather late in the history of the canon, but are valuable in understanding the history of the New Testament.

The earliest catalogue of New Testament books extant is the Muratorian Canon. It received its name from its discoverer, L.A. Muratori, who found it in 1740 in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, Italy. Although the manuscript we have comes from the seventh century, a notation in it mentions that the information contained in it was written shortly after the death of Pius, bishop of Rome who died in A.D. 157. It claims for itself that it was compiled and written by a contemporary of Pius. Thus, the original was probably composed not later than 170. It is written in Latin, though some scholars believe its original language might have been Greek. Although it is fragmentary, it consists of a number of pages, in which the author discusses the character of the writings of the New Testament. The first page is broken off, and the author begins that portion by mentioning Luke. The text begins with these words:

“at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed [them in his narrative]. The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples.

The writer does not mention Matthew or Mark, but refers to Luke as the third Gospel and John as the fourth, indicating, no doubt, that the first two Gospels were the same as we have. The Muratorian canon is not complete. It leaves out I and II Peter, James, I John and Hebrews. It is interesting that it contains the four shortest books in the New Testament, Philemon, II and III John, and Jude. One cannot help but wonder why longer books such as Hebrews, James, and I John were omitted, while those very short books of Philemon, II and III John, and Jude were included. Some scholars believe this is because two of the omitted books, Hebrews and I John, were not only anonymous, but they did not have specific addressees. No satisfactory explanation is given for the omission of the others. Considering the attention Peter received during the second century, one wonders why both I and II Peter were left out of the Muratorian Canon.

Athanasius (A.D. 326-372), Bishop of Alexandria, left a list of books he considered to be canonical. The importance of his list is that it was the first to include the same books as we have in our New Testament, no doubt reflecting the general usage of his day.

In his 39th Festal Letter, written in A.D. 367 he said the following:

Continuing, I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following: the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, after them the Acts of the Apostles and the seven so-called catholic epistles of the apostles -- namely, one of James, two of Peter, then three of John and after these one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul written in the following order: the first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians and then after these the one to the Galatians, following it the one to the Ephesians, thereafter the one to the Philippians and the one to the Colossians and two to the Thessalonians and the epistle to the Hebrews and then immediately two to Timothy, one to Titus and lastly the one to Philemon. Yet further the Revelation of John.

Emperor Diocletian issued an edict in A.D. 303 which Eusebius records. "It was the nineteenth year of Diocletian's reign [AD 303] and the month Dystrus, called March by the Romans, and the festival of the Saviour's Passion was approaching, when an imperial decree was published everywhere, ordering the churches to be razed to the ground and the Scriptures destroyed by fire." (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VIII.2.) The effect of this edict was that Christians differentiated between books which were considered Scripture and those just considered devotional or inspirational. Eusebius mentioned all of the books we have in our New Testament, but says that seven were controverted by some. These were Hebrews, James, Jude, II Peter, II and III John, and Revelation.

Evidence From Patristic Quotations

In Chapter 4 we discussed the importance of the Patristics with reference to their contribution toward the manuscript evidence for the text of the New Testament. Not only are they valuable for that, but also as witness to the existence and authority of the books of the New Testament. These writers are divided into two basic groups, the Ante-Nicene Fathers (those who wrote prior to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325), and the Post-Nicene Fathers (those who wrote after the Council). Those who wrote closest to the time of the first century are frequently referred to as the Apostolic Fathers.

During the period of the Ante-Nicene Fathers there was another group of early writers called the Apologists. They wrote against paganism and the abuses of the Roman government against Christians, usually addressing their writings to government officials. These writers go back to the early second century, Justin Martyr being among the first.

The testimony of Irenaeus (140-202) is of special interest because he is one of the latest links we have with the sub-apostolic period. He was Bishop of Lyons, and had been a student of Polycarp (69-155), who may have been acquainted with the apostle John. His writings attest to the canonical recognition of twelve of Paul's thirteen books, Philemon not being mentioned, and one from Peter, one from John, and the book of Revelation. In addition, in writing *Against Heresies*, III, 11, 8 he shows that, for a long time, the authority of the four Gospels had been axiomatic. It should be noted that at times the book of

Hebrews was included in the Pauline Corpus, probably to give it canonical recognition. This would bring the total number of Paul's writings to fourteen.

The importance of these quotations is that they show that the cited books were in existence at the time the quotations were written, and that the books were recognized by the writer and probably by the recipients as authoritative. This evidence for the canon is divided into three categories. First there are the quotations in which the writer credits the author by name, or the book from which he is quoting by name. Second, there are quotations in which the writer does not identify the source or author. Third, there are allusions to ideas, figures of speech, or forms of expression given by a writer in which he gives no identification of its source.

The force of the second and third class is that they give high probability to the existence of the book which contained that idea. The *Didache*, written in about A.D.120, refers to many ideas and forms of speech found in the New Testament. For example, it speaks of a broad way and narrow way, and the commandment to love God and one's neighbor (Did. 1:1-2), which are certainly reminiscent of statements of Jesus found in Matthew 7:13-14, and Matthew 22:37-39, but the writer does not identify his source. For other examples of the early Fathers' use of the New Testament books, see Chapter 4.

The Gospels

We do not know just when or how the four gospels were brought together, but shortly after John's Gospel was completed, it had circulated as far as Egypt, as seen in the John Rylands Fragment. Early in the second century, however, we see that the four Gospels were circulating together.

The church felt the need for information on the life of Jesus, and many people had written about him. How much of this was an accurate representation of the life and teaching of Jesus we do not know, because none of that material has survived. Luke stated that the reason he wrote was to overcome some of the uncertainty of these other accounts which were floating around. Notice that Luke makes three very significant statements in Luke 1:1-4. First, the fact that many accounts of Jesus' life and work were being circulated, second, that he had gathered his information from eyewitnesses, and third, that he was doing this so that Theophilus, Luke's addressee, might know the certainty of the things he had been taught. This statement shows that, amid the many, possibly unreliable, things written about Jesus, the church was looking for an authentic account of Jesus' life and his teachings.

Papias, in about A.D. 135, made some important statements about the writing of the first three Gospels. His accounts were recorded by Eusebius, the first church historian, who wrote in the early part of the fourth century. Concerning the Gospel of Matthew, Papias said, "For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence. (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* Bk. III 24:6). In another statement Papias says, "So then Matthew wrote

the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. III, 39:16).

Concerning the Gospel of Mark, Papias says, “Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ.” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. III, 39:15-16).

Concerning the Gospel of Luke, Papias says, “But as for Luke, in the beginning of his Gospel, he states that since many others had more rashly undertaken to compose a narrative of the events of which he had acquired perfect knowledge, he himself, feeling the necessity of freeing us from their uncertain opinions, delivered in his own Gospel an accurate account of those events in regard to which he had learned the full truth.” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. III, 14:15).

History does not say when the collection of the Gospels took place, but the evidence shows that it probably was very early. Justin Martyr, who lived and wrote about A.D. 135-150 said, “On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.” (Justin, *Apology*, LXVII.) Justin identifies these memoirs as the Gospels. About the same time there is a statement from II Clement IV, in which Jesus is quoted saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” This quotation is found in Matthew 9:13, showing that the writer is referring our canonical Matthew.

These quotations show, first that the church felt the need for authentic accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, second, that these accounts were written in different parts of the Roman world, and third, that the church was very interested in accuracy amid the uncertainty of some of the things that were then in circulation. No doubt an additional reason was the need for authentic teaching materials for evangelization and teaching of new converts.

Among the others who affirmed the same four Gospels we have were Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 190), Origen, (A.D. 215), and Tertullian (A.D. 220), to mention only a few. Furthermore, the existence of Tatian’s Diatessaron, completed in the middle of the second century, is evidence of the recognition and circulation of all four Gospels.

The Epistles

About A.D. 90 Clement of Rome wrote to the Corinthian church to try to correct some of their continuing problems. In his letter he reminded the Corinthian church that Paul had written to them concerning their problems, and encouraged them to take heed to the words of Paul. Writers of the early second century follow the same pattern in recognizing the authority of these writings. In II Peter 3:15-16 Peter refers to the writings of Paul, commenting that they were not easily understood, but he does not identify any of these writings. This shows, however that the writings of Paul were known and circulating at a reasonably early date.

The earliest list of books was compiled by an individual named Marcion, who was a heretic. He appeared on the scene in Rome about A.D. 140, having come from the small Black Sea city of Sinope, Pontus (modern day Sinop, Turkey). His father was bishop of that city. Some believe he was driven from his home church because of his heretical teaching. While in Rome he was strongly influenced by the Gnostics, and was also expelled by the Roman church.

Marcion denounced most of the New Testament books which were being used by Christians at that time, accepting only the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's epistles, all of which he altered to suit his own teaching. He believed that Paul was the only one who really understood the gospel. His evidence is valuable, not only because it shows the books he accepted, but also because it demonstrates the acceptance of those books by the church in general.

John Knox, a New Testament scholar of the twentieth century, believed that Marcion's selection of certain books as "in" and others as "out" effectively formed a canon or Scripture. This then, according to Knox, made the orthodox Christians aware of the need for an agreed upon list of "in" books, leading to the formation of the Christian New Testament canon. Although the Marcionite canon may have offered some impetus to the early church as it thought in terms of canonicity, it must be remembered that the church was used to having a group of authoritative books, namely the Old Testament to which it constantly referred, and almost all of the writers of the New Testament cited Old Testament books as authoritative. The idea of a book, or a canon was not a new idea to the early church.

In 1926, Edgar J. Goodspeed, of the University of Chicago advanced a theory of the Pauline Corpus which needs to be mentioned. His theory, briefly stated, is this. Goodspeed contended that Paul never expected his letters to be circulated, preserved, or regarded as Scripture. They were localized in their address and application. He concludes from this that Paul's letters had not been collected, and had, in fact, practically disappeared from the scene because Christians had lost interest in Paul. This, according to Goodspeed, was partly because Paul was not considered an apostle of equal standing with the original twelve. With the publication of Acts, which Goodspeed places about A.D. 90, interest in Paul was renewed, and people began considering him as an apostle on an equal footing with the original apostles. (It should be noted that this late date for Acts is not generally accepted by New Testament scholars.)

According to Goodspeed, the publication of Acts stimulated the church to seek out and collect the writings of Paul. This collection has been referred to by scholars as the Pauline Corpus. In the letter of Ignatius (A.D.115) to the Ephesians, Ignatius made reference to the Bishop of Ephesus whose name was Onesimus, and Goodspeed identifies him with Onesimus, the runaway slave, in Paul's letter to Philemon. Goodspeed believed that Onesimus was the force behind the assembling of the Pauline Corpus, and that it took place in the city of Ephesus. He theorizes that the book of Ephesians was not written by Paul, but by a disciple of Paul, as a sort of introduction to the Pauline Corpus. Goodspeed dates the writing about A.D.90. It should be noted that most of the evidence Goodspeed

uses is open to quite a different interpretation, and his conclusions are not accepted by all scholars.

Conclusion

The collection of the books of the New Testament was not a formal undertaking, nor was the canon decided by an “official” pronouncement of a church council. Church councils recognized the books of the New Testament, and sometimes listed them. However, Christians had used these books for many years before any such quasi-official list was made.

We know very little about the process of history in reference to the canon. Its process is not the important component, however. The important fact is that Christians in areas far remote from each other ultimately recognized the same books as authoritative and therefore canonical. Were there doubtful books involved? Yes, but the questions about them were soon resolved, and the books were either included or excluded. The process took a long time because some books were not readily accepted into the canon.

Some observations on these data need to be considered. First, the books of II and III John, being only a few verses long were accepted rather late, as was the book of Jude, also only a few verses long. Hebrews and Revelation were also late being accepted. Hebrews, no doubt because it was anonymous and was not addressed to a particular church or individual, was accepted later as a part of the Pauline Corpus. Revelation, because of its apocalyptic nature was quite different than any other book in the New Testament, which probably accounts for its difficulty in making it to canonical status. The books of James, and I and II Peter, part of the General Epistles, were also late in acceptance.

One must remember the statement of F.F. Bruce when commenting on a book of the Bible. “Its canonicity is dependent upon its authority. For when we ascribe canonicity to a book we simply mean that it belongs to a canon or list. But why does it so belong? Because it was recognized as possessing special authority.” (F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 95.) Furthermore, it should be remembered that throughout history, God has used human events and human beings to accomplish his purposes. The writing and gathering together of the books of the Bible as well as the preservation of its text throughout the centuries is evidence of God’s providence in providing us with his revelation. Well did Jesus say, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will never pass away.” Matt. 24:35.

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PATRISTIC EVIDENCE FOR NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS															
DATE	SOURCE	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	Rom.	I Cor.	II Cor	Gal.	Eph.	Phil.	Col.	I Thess.	II Thess
90-110	Clement (Rome)	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL		ID	ID--AL	ID--AL	MEN		ID--AL				
115	Ignatius (Antioch)	AL--POS			AL--POS					AL	AL	AL			
120	Didache	AL		AL	POS	AL	AL	POS	AL		AL	AL		AL	
130	Barnabas	ID					AL	AL	AL	AL	AL		AL		
140	Marcion			MEN			MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN
69-155	Polycarp (Smyrna)	AL--POS	POS	POS	POS	AL	POS	POS	POS	POS	AL	ID	POS	POS	POS
80-155	Papias	MEN	MEN		MEN										
100-165	Justin	AL	AL	AL	AL--POS	ANO	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL
157-170	Muratorion Canon	??	??	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN
180	Tatian (Diatessaron)	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL										
190	Clement (Alexandria)	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID
135-200	Irenaeus	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID
185-254	Origen (Alexandria)	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN
160-240	Tertullian	ANO	ANO	ANO	ANO	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL	ID--AL

KEY TO THE CHART

- AL** The writer alluded to the book, but did not directly quote it.
- ID** The writer either quoted or alluded to the book, AND identified the writer.
- POS** The writer gives evidence that he is possibly acquainted with the book.
- PROB** The writer gives evidence that he is probably acquainted with the book.
- MEN** The writer mentions the book, but does not allude to a teaching nor does he quote from the book.
- ANO** The writer used the book, but his use of it is recorded by another writer.
- ??** This is for the Muratorion Canon where Luke and John are mentioned as the "third and fourth Gospels," implying the existence of the two previous (Matthew and Mark).

PATRISTIC EVIDENCE FOR NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS														
DATE	SOURCE	I Tim.	II Tim.	Titus	Philem.	Heb.	James	I Pet.	II Pet.	I John	II John	III John	Jude	Rev.
90-110	ment (Rom)	PROB		ID--AL		POS--AL		ID--POS	AL--POS					
115	atius (Antic)	AL	AL				AL							
120	Didache	AL				POS		AL						
130	Barnabas					AL	POS	POS						
140	Marcion				MEN									
69-155	carp (Smy)	POS	POS	POS	POS		POS	AL		AL				
80-155	Papias							MEN		MEN				ANO
100-165	Justin	AL	AL			AL		AL						ID
157-170	atorion Ca	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN						MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN
180	n (Diatessaron)													
190	ent (Alexa)	ID	ID	ID		ID		ID		ID	ID		ID	ID
135-200	Irenaeus	ID	ID	ID	AL	ANO		ID--AL		ID--AL	ID--AL			ID--AL
185-254	n (Alexan)	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN	MEN
160-240	Tertullian	ANO	ANO	ANO	ANO	ANO		ID--AL		ID--AL			ID--AL	ID--AL

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